Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side.

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THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ATONEMENT & OTHER SERMONS

BY GEORGE WADE ROBINSON

INTRODUCTION BY REV. F. B. MEYER

GEORGE WADE ROBINSON was born in 1838 and educated at Trinity College. After leaving the Church of England he became a Nonconformist minister and spent the most important part of his ministry at Union Street Chapel, Brighton. Died in 1876.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TONEMENT & OTHER SERMONS

WADE ROBINSON

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and decorated by Eric Ravilious
for
J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Aldine House Bedford St. London
First Published in this Edition 1912

INTRODUCTION

THESE sermons will introduce to a wide circle of readers a preacher of whom comparatively few of the present generation have heard, but who, had he lived, must have been recognised as one of the great pulpit forces of the time. Whether he were more a Christian philosopher or a poet, it is difficult to decide; for he combined in a very unusual degree their differing gifts. Those who possess the rare copies of the two collections of his poems will bear witness that he had a poet's insight and a true power of rhythmic expression; whilst all who have read his recently published book, *The Galilean Philosophy*,[1] will admit that it is an eloquent statement of the philosophy of Christian mysticism.

If words could reproduce his personality, no trouble would be too great to discover them; but, after all, his soul was much more than the illumined face, the expressive eye, the ringing voice, the broad forehead, the tall and graceful form: and it is much to be able, by means of the following pages, to come in contact with a pure and noble soul that through the spirit realised the Eternal Presence, bathed in it, heard unspeakable words, and saw to the roots of things, where most men gather only the flowers and fruit.

George Wade Robinson was born on September 10, 1838. His father, who was a notable preacher, died young. His mother came of a good family, and one of her ancestors, Field-Marshal George Wade, commanded the forces against the Pretender in 1745; to his memory there is a monument in Westminster Abbey.

At the age of 21 he entered Trinity College, to study for the church; and like most thoughtful men, when called upon to substitute their individual for their traditional creed, he passed through a severe time of

[1] National Council of Free Churches, Memorial Hall, E.C.

mental and spiritual conflict, during the earlier stages of his university career. It was impossible, however, that a nature so susceptible to the tides of the spirit-world that are ever sweeping over us could be permanently bewildered; and he finally attained a firm standing-ground, from which he was never dislodged. Some of the following pages indicate the positions then attained, and to which he was ever eager to bring others. But one result of those mental experiences was his inability to subscribe to a creed as the condition of ordination; and ultimately he relinquished the Anglican Church and left the University, to obtain in the wider expanse of the Free Churches the opportunity he craved for growth and expression. After a term at New College, he became co-pastor with the venerable Dr. Urwick of Dublin. Then after a period of rest, necessitated by the threatened overstrain of his mental and nervous power, he exercised his ministry for a brief period in St. John's Wood, and for two and a half happy and successful years at Dudley; but it was as minister at Union Street Chapel, Brighton, that he found the sphere which gave him the unique platform for the exercise of his great and varied powers. The pews rapidly filled with a large and eclectic congregation, gathered by the magnetism of the preacher, and the freshness and eloquence of his message. The following pages tell something of the secret. The old doctrines were clothed with living force. The hearers felt that they were in touch with reality. He spoke as a prophet and seer. And though his sermons abounded in passages of exquisite poetry, he never sought beauty as an end, but as the befitting expression of eternal truths.

To quote the words of one who loved him much, and was a competent judge of his quality: "The breadth of his argument, the refinement of his language, the richness of his imagination, the warmth of his emotion, and the glow of an almost seraphic expression of face, combined to make him one of the most effective and entrancing of teachers. Had the vigour of the physical corresponded with the power of the intellectual, this singularly cultured, loving and lovable man must have

come to the very front rank of sacred orators, and become a power in Britain. He impressed his hearers with his own heart-reception of the story he had to tell, his own firm tread on the path he would have them enter, his own radiance with the light he wished them to receive. He could not fail to enrapture the poetic impulse, and he always fixed the attention of the logical thinker. While he pleased, he hallowed; while he brought the smile, he drew the tear; and while all blessed him, the prayer rose to the Father."

He embodied the truth he taught. Absolutely unselfish, he lived for others. There was no trace of dogmatism or self-assertion in his manner. He was clothed with a gracious humility. Nothing pleased him better than to pour out the rich stores of his inner life to a single listener, as their way was taken over the breezy Downs, or along the Shoreham waters, near which, towards the end of his life, he fixed his home.

He induced me, first, to appreciate the doctrine of Divine Love as taught by Madame Guyon and others of her school; and I can never forget the enthusiasm with which he attended the Oxford Convention in 1874, the main features of which are delineated in one of the subsequent sermons. But cognate as this aspect of truth was to his natural disposition, it was never allowed to assume an undue or exaggerated prominence in his ministry. It rather provided the soft blue background against which the snow-white summits of his thought were silhouetted, and the vernal atmosphere congenial to vital religion.

In 1875, when at the very height of his success, his health suddenly failed; and it became clear that he was needed to fill some sphere in that world which is always demanding our choicest treasures. In his farewell letter to his people, he repeated his unfaltering faith in God and Truth; and in his pathetic poem, "Dying Days," he unfolded the secret of his undying strength. At last, on January 23, 1876, he was called Home, and entered into the joy of Christ.

Mrs. Wade Robinson, who was united to him in the most perfect love granted to mortals, and who still

survives, as she reviews his character through the mist of years, says that the word which most fully describes him is "broad-and-large-heartedness." He had no sympathy with narrow and cramped views of God, or the operations of His Grace. Whilst very careful not to give needless pain to those who were unaccustomed to his wide horizon, he would never surrender his liberty of believing that the Divine Love was "higher than the highest heaven and deeper than the deepest sea;" and that infinite possibilities for all souls lay within its content. To quote his own words: "We shrink from any precise or dogmatic statements concerning a future of which we can know nothing. It is absolutely enough for us to believe that the future lot of every creature will more than satisfy us, even though our hearts were a hundredfold more exacting than the tenderest heart can be. The heart of God will be satisfied—that is enough."

Such is the man who, being dead, yet speaks through these pages. They are the afterglow of a rich sunset; the Indian summer of a glorious though brief spell of life; the aftermath of "the King's mowings."

F. B. MEYER.

June 1912.

The larger number of these Sermons were taken down from memory after they had been preached.

The " Fragments of Discourse " were used to fill up the sheet in the monthly form in which the Sermons were first issued. For them the preacher was largely indebted to members of the Congregation (especially one lady), by whom they were from time to time written down and preserved.—*Note by Mrs. Wade Robinson.*

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PHILOSOPHY OF THE ATONEMENT

JESUS THE CITIZEN

"The man Christ Jesus."—1 Tim. ii. 5.

I SPEAK of the man Christ Jesus as a citizen.

Jesus the Citizen was a Radical: that is, He was one who lived in connection with the *root* principles which underlie existence.

He appeared in an age which scarcely knew if there be any principles for the basis of existence. The age was eminently a superficial one. Men were content to found life on dogmas and traditions, and they cared to go no deeper. Such an age is always in danger of a reformer, and the deepest and truest thing it has is an instinctive knowledge of this. For in the economy of God, a heart is certain to come at last to which dogma and tradition are insufficient, and with an insight which pierces through the accumulated falsehood of centuries to the truth that God must work on fixed principles. And then comes the almost agonising question after these. Thus appeared the Son of God, the eternal Word, the Truth! And the spirit of his day quailed instinctively in his presence as before its natural foe.

This word *radical* has sadly suffered. And its sufferings have arisen from two sides. It has suffered at the hands of men who have assumed it to themselves, or have been content to receive it from others,

as their proper title. In the larger number of cases these persons have been of that class who perceive that things around them are not right, and who attempt to make them right by arbitrary change. And so their theories have been in the last degree shallow and impotent. Far from acting with the radical principles of existence, in conformity with which all change which betters the race must be made, they have not even known them. Such persons have assisted to procure for the term *radical* the sense of a headlong destructionist.

There have been, on the other hand, what may be called the fortunate classes. They have been born to estate and position, or have themselves acquired them. And they have had a large following of persons in sympathy with them, or dependent on them, or obedient to them. And all these have been filled with a certain satisfaction with existing conditions and a hostility to change. For in the lottery of life it was scarcely likely they should again draw so lucky a number. And the front presented by their opponents, the so-called Radicals, has helped to confirm them in these views. They have therefore recognised the Radical as the assailant of their place and their possessions, ready enough to accept the worst definition of Radical as the true one, and quite unready to conceive of anything better behind. Then these respectable classes have used the term in scorn; and the contempt of the respectable is always a brand; so Radical has grown to be a term of opprobrium.

But the word in its true sense is holy and good. It is almost a necessary word to describe Jesus as a man in his social and political relations; and it is certain to become increasingly necessary to describe his followers in the same relations, as they grow more

like their Master. In connecting the word, then, with Jesus we rescue it to its proper high and noble uses.

The age in which Jesus lived was remarkably a shallow one. All ages have been shallow, and the present age is shallow, as concerns the larger number of men. But Jesus' age was remarkably a shallow one. Every basal truth of human life was out of sight. God indeed was not forgotten, but nearly everything in God which it is important for men to know, and which ever had been known, was all but forgotten. With a calmness and authority, which were themselves witnesses to his Divinity, Jesus proceeded to lay bare the radical truths which had been lost and others which were new. He announced God as the first of all facts. He declared that God loved the world. He declared that God's relation to men was that of a Father, and that the most trivial concerns of men, and even of birds and flowers, were under his direct notice. He announced the brotherhood of men under this great Fatherhood. And He declared that in love to God and Man was the perfection of heart and life. These are the chief *root* truths which sustain the moral universe.

That world on which Jesus entered had not been shaped by these truths. Consider how the methods and institutions of the world have grown. In the economy of God the selfish heart of man has had free play. At least that providential oversight of the world which can never for a moment have been relaxed has not shown itself in arbitrary interference with the evil passions of men. And our own—let us say aftersight, instead of foresight, can justify the historic fact of Genesis that the early world, already moved by these selfish agencies in wild action, and not yet restrained by that governing force which the

welfare of the many slowly developed, was filled with violence. Every man sought his own, and that grand conception of solidarity which has slowly grown in the light of the Gospel, with all it involves of mutual love and self-sacrifice, was nearly unknown. Such was the world as God left it at first to crystallise into shape under the obedience of the selfish law.

And into what shapes did it crystallise? Those who were stronger by nature or circumstance gradually won to themselves the rule over their fellows. And this rule, still exerted on the selfish principle, took to itself all abnormal and terrible aspects. Ambition struggled for supreme empire. Avarice sought for universal wealth. Vile desires panted for their gratification. And war and massacre and oppression waited as ready slaves to execute the will of him who held that enchanted lamp which enforced their service.

Under the operation of this principle of selfishness —selfishness too often abandoned and unscrupulous, the world became what it is to-day. Under this operation have been developed the empires which have fallen in decay, and the empires which yet rise around us. The laws and customs of society, the modes of thought in the human mind, have grown in the same atmosphere, fashioned and coloured by its influence. Literature and Art and all that has sprung from mind bear the marks of that from which they sprang and of the atmosphere in which they were born—as the flora and architecture of a clime are the product of the clime itself. Indeed it has been impossible for anything in the world to escape the influence of that which is pre-eminently the world-spirit. Every man for himself has been the world-spirit, and the ways and institutions of the world, developed as it were hap-hazard amid the wild

ungoverned play of that spirit, bear every one the marks of its birth and of the forces which formed it.

It is thus seen that the world as we have it to-day has not been the growth of any set order and government which acted in accordance with the supreme laws of being, but rather that it has grown under a lawless condition produced by the struggle of innumerable separate wills acting on different principles and for different ends—in a word, under that condition of absolute separation from the Creator and his will, which is the very antithesis and contradiction of love.

For all this while, and amid all this process the radical truths and principles were out of sight. And let us clearly understand what that man who is content with the condition of the world, and yet believes in the God of the Bible, expects. He expects that a society of God's creatures may reach comparative social perfection without Him, without his laws, without the great truths of their own nature and destiny, without even the knowledge of that which He has set forth as the only true basis of any social relation whatever. Nay, he expects this social perfection will take place not only in ignorance of that knowledge which is necessary to form it, but in a state of absolute hostility to that knowledge and in contradiction of it. He expects that a farmer may be a successful agriculturist who is deficient in all experience of the operation of the seasons and of the principles of husbandry, and who, in his ignorance, not only acts without these but against them. That the world, as Jesus saw it, and in a lesser sense the world of to-day, should be a bad false world is only a necessity. And that He who is the Truth coming into such a world as a man, and so a citizen, should in his character of citizen be a Radical, was a necessity too.

To a pure mind like that of Jesus the view of things around Him must have been fraught with infinite distress. Over the land lay the shadow of conquest from rapacious Rome. The soldiers who crossed his way were the tokens of force and violence. The multitudes who pined in sickness gave evidence of another conqueror who marred God's fairest image. The shivering Lazarus at the rich man's gate hinted another story sadder still, because it spoke of cruelty and neglect. The religious men of the day were whited sepulchres. And even the great national Church in its possibilities of spirituality was something so low, as accommodated to the low spiritual condition of mankind, that it is wonder to read that He who had the Father always with Him ever touched at all that stiff ceremonial. And in and through it all He saw the hearts of men were not at rest; He saw them with eager precipitation drinking of whatever water was next to hand, and only drinking to thirst again—in fine, He saw a world which in all its ways and institutions was a long result of godlessness and sin.

In the midst of all these evils the conduct of Jesus seems at first sight surprising. He rarely referred to them: He generally acted as if unconscious of their existence. It *was* an evil that a strong kingdom should ruthlessly invade a weak one, but the patriotic fervour of his day finds no echo in the words of Christ. It *was* an evil that of two men born in the same world and children of the same God, one should lie lapped in luxury while the other starved at his gate. But He became no apostle for the levelling of society. Not that He was unconscious of these evils or inattentive to them, but He was concerned with something surpassingly deeper and larger. To Him the front fact of the world was that men were living without God.

They were away from the great radical truths of existence which only could bring them peace as individuals or communities. And what worth to deal with the evils resulting from godlessness while the godlessness itself remained? If even they were all destroyed, they would certainly return again, and perhaps in worse forms than before. The heart of man was without Love—that was the evil of the world. In his day there was no doubt a spirit of would-be reform abroad. Men saw certain evil fruits on the ends of the branches of society and they attempted to clip off the fruits, forgetting that the root which had pumped up the juices was still there. They saw no deeper than the surface of things. These were the so-called radicals of their day. And our day has its Radicals too, men who know the world is wrong but who are without the knowledge of how it may be put right. It is an easy thing to see that the world is wrong, for the truth comes home to ourselves in one form or other of suffering. And it is an easy thing to whip up an agitation against any existing abuse, for there are multitudes who feel that particular abuse press on their lives. But all such reformers have missed the great truths whose possession only could give them a right to the name of Radical—a name which in their ignorance they dare to assume and, assuming, to degrade.

If Christ lived in the present day, He would stand as clear of the contending factions which break up our social and political life, as in his own day He did stand clear. Now, as then, his attitude would resemble that of some traveller in savage lands who finds the people of a region perishing from disease, a disease which he at once recognises as the result of uncleanness and intemperance. He sees the doctors of the nation divided in controversy—some attribut-

ing the disease to a change in the moon; others to an improper sacrifice to their idols. Outside these controversies He stands in pity, and simply states the truth.

Jesus the Citizen, then, did not make it his business to assail the abuses existing around Him. They were not the greatest evil—*that* was the state of heart from which they had grown. Till that state was changed the evils themselves were the best things possible for men. Had we the framing of the world we should abolish its sufferings and wrongs, and change it into a delightful paradise, neglectful of the moral condition of mankind. We should, if we had the power, make men happy without God. But happy without God they shall not be, and must not be. One paradise only there is, and that where the Lord God is the Light. When the heart is surrendered to God it is safe to be happy. But while the heart is without God it would be as unsafe as it certainly is impossible. No, the misery is good for us; the terrible vain thirst of the heart within, the stamp of deadly sickness on the frame, the agonies of bereavement and wasted affection, the wide blast of pitiless war, the wrongs and oppressions which crush out of men a cry to God—all, all are good, for they announce to men their departure from God, and the dreadful results of that departure.

And so Jesus passed by the abuses which surrounded Him with comparative unnotice. Even the great wrong of slavery received no stroke from his just hand. He was content to preach the Kingdom; He was content to set in motion that mighty Gospel, which in its resistless spread should swallow up all these deaths in victory.

I have been speaking of Jesus Christ the Citizen, in view of the fact that each of his followers is a

citizen too. Christians have adopted two different courses in respect of their social and political relations. Some have said, " We are citizens of a higher commonwealth, and have henceforth nothing to do with the concerns of a passing world." But others, with a truer insight, have recognised the world all along as God's, as the scene whereon He is developing some wondrous scheme of love, and have felt it impossible to abandon a work in which God Himself is engaged. In their social and political relations they have felt the responsibility of citizenship descend upon them. But in the conscientious discharge of these responsibilities they have frequently been harassed by questions as to what exactly these responsibilities are. For they have found themselves in a world whose laws, customs, and institutions, are all out of harmony with the ideal of a Christian State. How were they to act? Were they at once to array themselves in hostility against these laws, customs, and institutions? Were they at once to put forth the strength of their citizenship to overthrow the false and to build up the true? Or was there any ground which they might occupy, where, with the full sense of what was false and what was true, they might yet allow those things which they condemned?

To all this enigma the life of Jesus the Citizen is an answer.

His followers, if, indeed, they are his followers, must be as He was, Radical. They must break through the shallow conventionalisms which surround them, and descend on the great principles of being. They must see the world, and men, and themselves, in relation to these principles. Once more they must move through a world whose birds and flowers are over-arched by the tender care of a God, who, to his noble creature, man, can be no less than Father.

Once more all creation must seem to their eyes to live and move and have its being in the atmosphere of this great Love—even as one small insect on a summer's day swims in the infinite ocean of sunlight. Once more men must seem to them invested with the dignity of God's image, and the poor, and outcast, and defiled, those of whom men have no hope, and who have no hope of themselves, must become the objects of that patient love which is labouring for their renewal and which signified its strength on Calvary. And from life must fade off the false and bewildering glare which brightens it, till ambition and avarice and pride, with the rest of them, are seen as haggard lies, and the soul lives again in presence of the truth that in love to God and Man is all fulfilled.

To one who has reached this illumination it is easy to form some faint conception of what the world would be if this illumination were the common possession. And he readily perceives that the difference between that world and this world simply depends on the existence of the illumination. It therefore becomes to him the main object not to strive directly for the improvement of the world, but rather to spend himself in endeavours to secure for men that illumination which will itself bring round the improvement. And he finds, as we have seen, that his Master's chief work was indeed to preach the Kingdom.

There is, then, this almost infinite difference between the Christian citizen and the ordinary politician; the latter is labouring by direct effort to ameliorate the harsher existing conditions; the former has it for his chief work to bring in a state of mind and heart among men, in which not only would these false conditions be unable to survive, but simply and naturally all that is right, all that is pure, all that is

gentle, all that is lovely, all that is of good report would take their place.

To those who believe in the Gospel of Christ it will be a statement needing no proof that the Christian Radical places himself at a point to move society from whence a vaster power can be exercised than from any other. Not only this, but he does also from that point wield the very powers which from all other points are wielded, and with surpassingly greater result. Not only does he command a power exclusively his own, but he employs the powers which other men use more effectually than themselves. As exclusively his own he has that marvellous Gospel story which has come for ages to the hearts of men with the rushing mighty wind of spiritual influence, blowing whence none could tell, blowing whither none could tell. But in addition to this, among the philosophers he is a greater philosopher than they, for who can attempt any account of human existence, or any theory of the universe, at once so charged with epic grandeur, so comprehensive in its illimitable sweep, so harmonious in itself and with the great facts of our being, so satisfying to the mind and above all to the heart of man, as that conveyed in an intelligent presentation of the story and philosophy of Jesus Christ? Among the poets he is a greater poet than they, for it is his to disclose that moral and spiritual loveliness which can only find its expression in character: of which all other loveliness that eye has pictured or heart has dreamt of is but a poor and perishing type. Among the philanthropists, he is a greater philanthropist than they, for with an ardent desire to make the life of men purer and happier, which has never been equalled by any philanthropy outside the Christian, he joins a yet more ardent desire to raise man even in his earthly condition by bring-

ing him into the infinite blessedness of the knowledge and love of God. Among the statesmen, he is a greater statesman than they, for while they seek to perfect social and political relations by casting out arrangements which have been proved pernicious, and bringing in and consolidating arrangements which give the promise of good, he declares the eternal principles of all social fellowship, which once received and acknowledged make of themselves a perfect commonwealth as easily and as surely as the sun makes the summer. And thus all orders of men who are working to make the world better are, each in his own peculiar sphere, overmatched by him who is living out Christianity, who yet holds and wields, outside and in addition to all these varied and superior powers, another power peculiar to himself, and surpassingly vaster and stronger than all the rest combined—that Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth.

We see, then, the ways in which the Christian Radical is acting on the world. His first and largest power is that spiritual power which is directly tending to salvation and future blessedness. Next in order come those sidelong influences proceeding, and sometimes almost unconsciously, from his character and life, which place him ahead of all other reformers in their different paths. And lastly, there remains that field of operation, in which, as a Christian citizen, he unites in special efforts for the overthrow of institutions that seem pernicious, or the setting up of institutions that seem desirable.

I have already pointed out how Jesus the Citizen confined his efforts to the first two of these methods, and how he neither provoked, nor took part in any special agitation. It remains for us to discover the

duty of his followers in this respect. And we must carefully distinguish between the position occupied by Jesus and the position occupied by his followers. During his life he was engaged in merely sowing the seeds of Christianity, and even that work was not completed by Himself, nor till after his death and resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit had supplied what was wanting of the elemental truths. So that during his own life, not only was the world absolutely uninfluenced by his religion, but the very truth on which that religion rests was not yet complete.

We are differently placed. A perfected Christianity has now for nearly two thousand years been slowly leavening the world. And every century of its history is not only displaying itself as a more fully developed power in the spiritual apprehension of men, but is also showing a world riper for being and acting in accordance with its precepts. It is clear that if ever the wilderness is to be changed into the rose-garden, there must come a moment when each brier of the wilderness shall be plucked up, and each rose of the garden shall be planted. And it is also clear that owing to the only partial influence which Christianity yet exercises, there will always be a residuum of worldly opinion, and worldly influence, opposed to the plucking up of the brier and the planting of the rose. For it is not likely that men who belong to the wilderness, and love that style of dwelling-place, shall behold with patience the spread of an innovation which threatens the destruction of their native home. And thus every distinct step in advance made by Christianity is made in the face of an opposing foe.

Now all this involves a social and a political action on the part of those who prefer the rose-garden

to the wilderness. To say that Jesus the Citizen engaged in nothing of the sort is not to the purpose, for we have seen that in his day the world was not yet ripe for such agitations, and indeed, is yet only partially ripe. Jesus did not, as we have said, raise his hand against slavery, for to have done it would have been simply useless. A vast preparation of public opinion was necessary before any hostility could be offered to one of the oldest. most widespread, and most infamous institutions which ever loaded with crime and misery the breast of God's world. But the day came, if not in the life of Christ, yet in the life of his Church, when that preparation of public opinion produced by his sweet Gospel was sufficiently advanced, and with the day rose the man.

A stranger journeying through forest lands is attracted to a number of men gathered around a tree from whose summit a strong rope slants to a short distance. He inquires the reason of this arrangement, and is informed that they are about to pull down the tree. But observing that the men are engaged, not with the rope but at the root of the tree, he asks why they are not pulling. The answer is that the trunk is not yet sufficiently sawn through; he must wait a little. He waits and watches with interest the men working the saw through the huge mass. At last the work is completed. They remove their instruments, and gather at the end of the rope. One strong pull, and the growth of centuries crashes on the earth.

The first soft words of Jesus which announced the radical truth of man's brotherhood marked the tree of slavery to fall, and in that day the rope was fastened to its hoary top. But what use to pull it then? Ages of patient sawing must come first. At last the instincts of good men told them the hour had arrived.

Wilberforce beckoned them to the rope; the thing fell; and they heard the noise in Heaven.

And what Christian citizen could then have stood with folded hands? To be an agitator was to be a man; to be anything else was to be a brute. Had Jesus then lived He would have followed Wilberforce —say rather He had been the Wilberforce himself.

And therefore the inaction of Jesus as concerns special agitations is no reason for our inaction. The only reason for our inaction as respects any institution which is based in wrong is the fact that the time for its fall is not yet arrived. For our enlightenment on this subject we must employ a wise discretion And it is delightful to think that even that discretion may be assisted by the spirit of Him who is present with us in every such work.

But it still remains that our chief effort as Christian Radicals is to preach the Kingdom. By that effort do we hasten the special agitation against special wrongs and the days of their doom and their fall. It was as the Head of this spiritual Kingdom that Jesus felt all power was given unto Him in Heaven and on earth. To stand as an illiterate preacher in a backwood hut proclaiming to a few rough men the tenderness and the grace of Jesus Christ, is to strike a blow which rocks with its reverberations every evil institution in the world.

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

The Solidarity of Suffering.—The Gospel teaches us that we cannot live to ourselves. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For so subtle and manifold are the cords which connect us with our fellow-men that we never cease to influence them. And this is true of our suffering as of everything else. No man suffers to himself. If it were possible to analyse the spiritual world we should find that some of the purest and tenderest influences for good have had their source in suffering hearts. From the depths of trial and sorrow, and at the very times when men to themselves seemed most useless, there have gushed up sweet waters to fertilise humanity.

If you believed this, could you not bear to suffer? If you believed that you were part of a great whole, one individual in a great society of God, and that the griefs allotted to you had their part in the general system, and subserved to the general good, could you not cheerfully submit?

You enter an engine-house, where a large machine is turning its multitudinous wheels. And down in an obscure corner one little wheel revolves, and this little wheel is not content; it does not understand why it should be placed down there; it does not see why great wheels should be lifted up, and turn their brightly-polished circles in the light, while it is neglected and unseen. But once get that little wheel to understand that its work is as useful as theirs, that the results of the whole machinery depend as much on it as on them, and you make it content.

The chief misery of all suffering springs from a sense of its uselessness. Once get rid of that, and suffering becomes a different thing. The soldier who feels he is helping to save his country thinks little of the weary march and the cold bivouac.

The Strength of Evil.—There is a man whose dwelling is by a river. And oftentimes he walks along its banks, and beholds the broad expanse of water flowing smoothly past. One day he falls in by accident and is borne out into the stream. And, oh, how swiftly he is carried along! The trees and the houses seem to fly past on either hand. He had never dreamt there was such a might in the current that went so silently by. He puts forth all his strength to gain the shore, but his strength is weakness against the strength of the swift tide, and fain he is to save himself by grasping the branch of some drooping tree.

Men walk beside the river of their hearts, and little deem of the force with which they flow toward evil. Before the murder of Uriah, David did not suspect what his heart could do. But he fell in, and, borne along by the torrent of passion, he learned the weakness of his will to contend against it. And many are driven to the feet of God by the sheer fright of discovering that they are being swept as on a cataract to hell.

Man a house for God.—You see a house standing in a fair situation—a noble-looking house. You ask who lives there. No one. Who built it? So-and-so. Did he not build it that he might live in it? No; he built it just to be a house, and to stand there.

God made us that He might inhabit us, and not with any other intention. No man is complete without God dwelling in him; he is like an empty and desolate house. But the worst is he will not remain empty; all evil things that fly and crawl will come to dwell where God is not. God in us, and every thought and feeling alive from the beating heart of God—this is what God intends for us.

LAW—SIN—GRACE

"The law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded grace did much more abound."—Rom. v. 20.

Incorrect views of the Fall of man are sometimes received. It is thought that the Fall happened to occur, but that it might also have happened not to occur—that if the experiment of the Garden of Eden were repeated, the result might be as glorious as it is thought to have been miserable; and Adam and Eve and all their posterity might continue pure and sinless. And thus the Fall is made to appear a sort of breakdown in the plan of God.

This notion has done much mischief. It has done mischief to Christians themselves, for it has resisted the growth of a true philosophy of man's inner nature. But it has done even more mischief outside the Church, for it is a presentation of the truth well adapted to promote infidelity. And, as a matter of fact, infidels keep asking the question, who this God of love may be, who had it in his power to prevent the Fall, and so the age-long misery of the world, and who yet did not exert Himself to prevent it.

Because I believe in a God of love who does not afflict willingly, I cannot regard the Fall as an accident that might have been prevented, or, indeed, as a preventable thing at all. Everything that is likest to God in us declares that had it been at all preventable, the loving Father had prevented it. Or else you picture Him as allowing his children to fall over into the pit of sin that, after ages of suffering, He might deliver them.

And further, all Scripture and all our study of the nature of man convince us that we are such beings as must grope our way through sin up to the brightness of the eternal throne. A being in God's image can have no perfection but in loving God with all his heart. But the love of God comes, with the help of God's spirit, from the knowledge of God; and the knowledge of God is only gained by experience. But man in the beginning of his history had yet had no experience. He is represented as arising into existence in a state of innocence—that is, a state in which he had committed no conscious transgression. And in this state he has a certain communion with God. But this innocence is not purity, and this communion with God is not communion with the Father. From the innocence to the purity, and from the communion with God to the communion with the Father, there stretches a long wild road through a land of darkness and terror. Through sin, and through sin only, can he pass upward into the highest heavens. The Fall has to come!

What is the Fall? To choose consciously the service of Self instead of the service of God. Turn to the account in Genesis. They looked on the tree and saw that it was *good for food*, and *pleasant to the eyes*. "Good" and "pleasant"—has not this been the language of our selfishness for ever? There is no thought of God; there is no thought of his universe. Man looks in upon himself, forgetting all besides, and only asking what will touch his sensations with pleasure.

Without the commandment of God, Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree unconscious of evil. The natural desire of their hearts was after the "good" and the "pleasant," and there was nothing at first to show that this desire was wrong. Had God not

spoken, they had lived on in self-indulgence and in innocence. They had continued to use the world around them for the lowest of all purposes, mere animal gratification; and with no knowledge that their life was low, or that there was a higher life. But up in the deep heavens above their bright garden, the God who made them was moving in a life of love and self-forgetfulness. And the first glimpse of that divine life revealed to them would be certain to display their own life in its true character. The command came: Thou shalt not eat! Thou shalt refrain from gratifying this desire for the "good" and the "pleasant" that thou mayest serve a larger interest than thine own. Now contending claims arose. On the one hand Self was clamorous for its pleasure. On the other hand, Conscience, stirred into existence amid the elements of his nature, arose and pressed on man the claim of a something outside himself to which he was owing. It was a terrible moment—it is always a terrible moment in its endless repetitions in human hearts. But desire is stronger yet than duty. He falls. And thus the law—the spirit of a higher life—has entered his life of innocence, which is only innocent because ignorant, and has changed it into a life of conscious guilt. The law has entered that the offence might abound.

From that day an increasing light, a light increasing as man had strength to bear it, was thrown on the opposing claims of Self and God. Through Moses there came a larger law; without which men had gone on in the innocent, because the ignorant, practice of much that was evil. But again the "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" started up with lifted hands of warning and threatening; and the innocent became the sinful. This is affirmed by the Apostle in the twentieth verse of the chapter: "For until the law

sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law." The sin was there—sin in relation to God and his other creatures, but not sin to the individual himself till the law had made it sin. Again the law entered that the offence might abound.

With the revelation of Christ there came a yet larger law. Till then he who kept the Mosaic commandments had been held a righteous man — except, perhaps, by those few of the advanced spirits who are always on in front of their time. The law of love was not yet apprehended, and transgressions of the law of love were not yet imputed. And so men lived innocently in constant transgression of this law. But Jesus revealed the law of love, and all things became new. No longer on the outward acts did the light of justice fall, but that light settled with fierce intensity on the state of the heart. And the heart, never before so invaded, shrank from the inexorable discovery of its most secret depths and springs. For, viewed in this all-searching light, everything became sin. The old caves and holes in which men had striven to nestle were ruthlessly overturned and abolished. Little it availed to plead, "I am not an extortioner or unjust; I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." The only answer was the heaven-wide repetition of the new law—Thou shalt *love* with all thy heart! And every honest man who examined his heart in the sight of God came down on the truth that not love but selfishness reigned within. Instead of loving God with all his heart, he loved himself with all his heart. And since the judgment-seat had been transferred from the region of act to the region of motive, and since the one reigning motive was the love of self, his whole heart and life were found to be guilty before God, and all the world was found to be guilty

before God. The law, the new all-embracing law of love, had entered, and had made sin to abound.

Further, when we pass on from the historical entrances of law, we find the truth that in the experiences of the Church and of every individual there is a gradually increasing light thrown down upon the law which has been revealed. For both the Church, and each individual in the Church, grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. The law of love is a larger thing in the view of the Church to-day than it was a thousand years ago. And this better apprehension of the law has made sin to abound in proportion. And the earnest disciple of Christ sees more in the law of love from year to year, so that it is a common experience to find a something becoming sin which once was absolutely innocent. In the clearer apprehension of itself, the law makes a new entrance, and the offence abounds.

We perceive, then, the *nature* of law. Law is the expression in precepts of the life which God is living, and for which man has been created. This life man was incapable of understanding at first, in any broad statement of it. And the precepts become gradually higher and wider as he is able to learn. Then the precepts melt into the principle of love. And the principle of love itself goes on deepening and widening to the apprehension which the principle itself is slowly educating.

We perceive, also, the *office* of law—to change the selfish life into the sinful life. Man had remained an innocent being in the selfish life but for the coming of law. "Sin is not imputed where there is no law." But God did not create man that he might be only an innocent being. That had been unworthy of God—that had been unworthy of man—that had been unworthy of the fair world in which he was placed.

What! A being in God's image left to waste himself for ever in animalism, which had been animalism no less that he was too ignorant to recognise its baseness! A being formed for rest only in God, yet shut down and starved for ever in separation from that presence, the first touch of which should surprise him into a knowledge of his sinfulness. Had God so ordered for man — had God stopped short at the state of man's innocence, fearful of the fall which knowledge should bring, and of the guilt and misery that should follow—*then* indeed had been the breakdown and the failure. The world had still swept round the sun, filled with populations who never knew a wrong because they never knew a right; but it had never borne an Abraham, the friend of God; a David, thirsty for the living God; a Daniel, true to God in the face of ruin and death. Man, the mighty being—man, the ever-advancing race—had broken off in his first moral babyhood. This had been the Fall indeed!

And we perceive two distinct senses of the word "sin." There is the sin against God and others, and also against oneself, which is not sin to the moral nature, because he who commits it is yet without law. It is innocent sin, but not on this account less fraught with damage and hurt. For, being contrary to the order of God's creation, there results a disorder. One result of sin, and one only, does not follow on ignorant transgression—the consciousness of guilt and degradation in the subject. There is, then, this innocent sin, and there is the sin after law which has become sin to the sinner.

The only life which can be true to the order of things around us is the life in which God is loved with the whole heart. This is the glorious life of heaven to which God is bearing us on. And Adam

in Paradise was not in this life of perfected love. The motive of Adam's life was not God, but self. And so Adam in Paradise was leading a life of sin—a life of sin because not a life of love. And the innocence of Adam, if continued, would have produced in himself and in the world all the disorders consequent on sin, excepting those which follow moral pollution. It needs but the entrance of law to show him his true condition—a condition which God could never intend to last. The law enters, and sin abounds. The stream of Adam's life, which before flowed smooth and clear, has met the first dam of God's command, the first claim of a universe outside himself, and over that dam it has boiled and broken.

This we name "the Fall!" God never so named it. Man hiding from God in the garden was higher up than man meeting with God before, content with himself, unblushingly innocent. The first step toward God's heaven is to exist at all; the next is to find out that there is a heaven for which we exist.

With these thoughts before us, we are free to consider more in detail the precise ends for which the Law makes the offence to abound.

1. *To discover to man his true nature and condition.* He is a sinner, and he does not know it; he is moved only by desires for the good and the pleasant, and he is ignorant of a nobler life; he is living in such a way that his contact must be injurious to all around him, and this he is unable to perceive. And now the God who loves him, who has created him in his own image, and who will never leave him nor forsake him till he has carried him up to his great destiny—must open to him the knowledge of himself. Man must see himself as a sinner. And this is secured by the setting forth of law.

We are educated by discovering the Perfect that

rises above us. While that Perfect is not revealed, our Imperfect may be the highest Perfect possible, for anything we can tell. And even though we should be unsatisfied with what we are, there is nothing to tell us of what we might be. But the revelation of the Perfect always convicts us.

Far away from this civilisation of ours there are men living in savage regions, content if not happy, in their savageness. *Happy* they could not be, for they are men, and the image of God in them can never be happy till it is united with God. But content they are with their state, seeing they have none of that discontent which can only exist in the presence of a higher. With no suspicion of any life nobler than his own, the rude hunter runs down his game, or paddles his canoe across the lake, or crawls at night into the wretchedness of his squalid hut.

He who would lead that savage to a higher style of living, must first create in his breast the discontent and degradation which some small knowledge of that higher life will bring. He must make some contrast between civilisation and barbarism, that barbarism may be seen as barbarous. In a word, the law must enter that the offence may abound.

The village painter struts before his glowing daub with an exultation that is fed by the praise and wonder of his still more ignorant neighbours. But he happens to visit London. He is attracted to one of the exhibitions of paintings. The great masterpieces awe and humble him, for though he cannot apprehend their excellence, he can see enough for his own condemnation. The law—the Perfect of beauty as expressed in these high reaches after itself, has entered his soul, and has made the imperfections and offences of his own poor work to abound.

And in all such cases the offence abounds in pro-

portion to the entrance of law. And since law, or rather that Perfect which law represents, can only be gradually apprehended, the abounding of offence will at first be narrow, but it will widen with every increase in the knowledge of law. And we have already seen that this has been the case with the conscience of sin in the world.

The first great step, then, in the process of man's salvation is to make him know himself as a being almost infinitely below the standard of perfectness in thought and feeling and act. He must be led to see, with more or less distinctness, that his heart is desperately wicked, since all its movements are obedient to the selfish law. He must be led to desire with more or less earnestness that these movements may become obedient to the love of God; that he may have a new heart and a right spirit. And when these changes are wrought—when there is crushed from the depth of his being the agonising cry, Behold I am vile, I abhor myself! the work of salvation has already commenced, and the heart has begun to stretch out its hands after a purity that is not in itself.

I have now spoken of the conviction of sin as dependent on the sense of good and evil before God. But there are other means at work to produce it beside those of moral conviction. Things are so ordered that the life in sin cannot be prosperous. And although the moral conviction that sin is an evil thing is the highest result, it is rarely the first. The first conviction usually secured in the heart is not so much that sin is an evil, as that sin is a wretchedness and a mistake.

God gives us the world and we go out and live in it. But we like sheep go astray, wandering each after his own way. Then comes the issue. The joys that lured us from the distance vanish as we approach.

Thorns and briers pierce us, and the wolf barks close at hand. We are forlorn and desolate. And in the wildness and darkness of our misery there arises the conviction that something is wrong. We *feel* we were not created for this. And the lesson is burnt on heart and brain that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God.

And we see around us the results of sin. Slowly we learn that sin is the parent of all that various and pestilent brood of ills which men in their sad experience have baptised with foul and fearful names. The shadow that lies upon Nature, the tearings and earthquakes in the life of nations, the crimes and miseries of social life; all these we learn to connect with sin as their author. And every man, by beholding the results of sin, is warned against putting into motion the forces which work a ruin so dire.

By this knowledge of the power there is in sin to blast and destroy the law makes a new entrance, and again the offence abounds. The men of the world who have not yet seen the stern but beautiful face of Law, multiply sins with no consciousness that they are shooting out arrows into the air which shall strike and rankle in the breast of others. But he into whose eyes the eyes of Law have looked, has learnt the dreadful lesson. Henceforth there is to him no such thing as lonely sin; sin enacted in the secretest place of being steals out like a subtle miasma, to be wafted on the public winds with its burden of death. The effects of every sin may indeed be winged and helped out on their dreadful mission; but they cannot be imprisoned, they cannot be buried, they cannot be swept again into the foul pit which produced them. With the knowledge that he is a sinner, there is now bound up the knowledge that in his sin he is a curse to others.

On the banks of a river there stands a mill where poisonous chemicals are manufactured. And for a long time the drainage from the mill into the river carries sickness to the villagers half a mile down, who use the water. But the mill-master knows not the mischief done by his mill. Then at last the poisoning of the water is perceived. And if still he permit the evil, his innocent hurt of others has become a guilty hurt. The knowledge of that hurt is an entrance of law which makes the offence abound.

2. A second end for which the law makes the offence abound is, *to discover to man his powerlessness to rise into a higher life.*

The entrance of law has made him a sinful being. He can now form some thought of a life according to law, and he desires to enter that life. It seems to him a beautiful thing to live according to the mind of God. But the law which has wrought this great change in him is unable to remove the evil or supply the good it has shown. It reveals itself, but it reveals no way by which man may rise into union with itself. It is a white summit standing in the silence of the far blue heavens, with no solitary path by which the foot may climb.

And his own heart is helpless to amend. He tries to keep the law, but he cannot do it. By extreme watchfulness, by fixed and stern resolution, he may succeed in abstaining from some forms of outward sin, he may succeed in bracing himself to the performance of long-neglected duties. But when all this is accomplished he is unsatisfied still. For that spiritual law which has shined into the depth of his heart, has convinced him that not the outward life only, but, more important still, the inward life must be made clean in the sight of God. And how cleanse the very springs of being within him? How obey

that law of love which commands that our innermost motives be free from every taint of selfishness? His outward life he may harness and drive, even against his inclination; but how alter that mysterious life within? how give himself a new heart-beat and life-blood? how *create* himself anew?

For the law is like a doctor who excels in diagnosis but who is without any other power. He comes to the bed of the sick man, and gives him a true and full account of his disease. This done, he turns and goes. He has shown the patient all his misery, a misery of which he had not before conceived; but he cannot cure him; and he leaves him to find out that he cannot cure himself.

But we need this stern treatment. It is much for a man to learn that he is a sinner, for he has learnt it by seeing the great holy heavens bend away above him. And it is still more for him to learn his weakness to climb those heavens of himself, for then he is prepared to hear that there is One who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour.

3. *And thus are we driven to God for help.* "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." The very method of producing sin by law is devised and carried out in love. Sin is only a little island; grace is the boundless ocean that spreads around it.

This truth makes the world tolerable. On any other theory it is intolerable. A God of love has deliberately undertaken the process of developing beings in his own image into his own nature. And the process He employs is the best process, the only process. As seen by us it is long and terrible. To Him it seems short and light, in view of the great result. And we know that even a man has reached that point from whence is seen the light affliction which endureth but for a moment, working the

exceeding and eternal weight of glory. There is no failure anywhere. The whole scheme and course are just what, from the nature of things, they must be, and what Love knew they would be. The beginning in innocence, the entrance of law, the conscience of sin, the helplessness and misery, and then the great salvation in Jesus Christ, all are united as necessary parts in the great design of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Good—good it is to acknowledge this—to stand in the midst of this wasted and wailing creation with a song on the lip which pierces through the wailing, and flies above it, as the strong bird shoots through the morning mist into the bright clear sunshine overhead!

With this faith in our hearts we can listen to the "still sad music of humanity" and the cataract roar of a world's headlong iniquity; we can look on the wrenchings of pain and the bleak desolations of poverty; we can stand by the bed of sickness and the open grave; and everywhere and in all things, with the high sense in us that somehow all these things are ours, and that through them all is being prepared a glory which without them never could have been—we can thank God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And the grace which abounds in the great design still abounds as the details of the scheme are unfolded.

Grace abounds in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Has the God of love created man, knowing beforehand that he will first use himself in sin, and has He failed to provide a sufficient means of escape from that sin? In the Atonement of Jesus Christ there is a strength for meeting the results of sin which no exaggeration can overstate. When the law has done its worst, when it has entered the heart, and by its presence

has made sin to start up everywhere, and to appear exceeding sinful, when once more it has smoked and thundered with its awful menace against the sinner—then, and only then, are we ready for the sweet strong entrance of Jesus Christ's Atonement, and all the heavens filled with the music of that truth, that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Pale Man, bleeding on the Cross, we trust Thee—we trust Thee! The love that throbbed in thy weak and shameful death is surely stronger than all the rest!

And grace abounds in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The design of God in creating man was to create him for union with Himself. That he might reach this, he has been allowed to pass through the wild experience of sin. And when the process has so far advanced that he begins to feel his need of God's help, and his absolute dependence on that help, will God refuse it? No more, Christ says, than the father will deny bread to his hungry child. For this would be to say that the world is sustained to produce a certain result in man, and yet that when he becomes capable of this result it is withheld. We may be sure that the spiritual help we need abounds over all our need of it. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work."

O the cisterns of God are full for ever! The fulness of God yearns over our emptiness. And loving is the process by which our emptiness is revealed that we may cry out after the fulness of God.

4. *The work is only completed when man has past into that relation with God wherein consists his true and everlasting life.*

Man is driven to God for refuge. The love which he finds in God awakens an answering love in him. And his continual contact with God in his need and

dependence sustains and nourishes his love. It now becomes his wish to live no longer to himself, but to the Saviour who died for him.

And here the great end is reached. What the law could not do, love has done. The weakness of man arose from this, that he was centred on himself. But now he begins to escape from the old centre of self to the new centre of God. And just as he is centred on God he finds peace and power. He has gained the method of righteousness. He may not yet realise the love of God in all its fulness, but he sees enough to understand the meaning of that command for universal love which once condemned him. He understands now that all the law is fulfilled in love. He understands that he has entered on the right path, and that it is by that path henceforth onward and upward for ever.

All we want is love. How little of this we guess in our first experiment of life! No—we want self; we want the good and the pleasant; we want gold and fame and power. And when our dream of mere animalism and worldliness is broken by the entrance of law, and the great universe of duty first opens on us, still how far off is any thought of love! As little as the infant understands the treatment of its mother do we understand what is being done with us in this great plan of God. Least of all do we guess that it is really for love the deepest part of us is yearning—that it is really onward to love the providence of God is bearing us. Blind, foolish, rebellious, we contend every step of the way with that kind Hand which is leading us on.

And the dark and dreadful exigency of sin was needful to reveal the love of God, and so win us to love Him. Without that wild occasion, love had remained for ever an impenetrable secret, locked up

in the silence of his breast. God had been love, but beyond the limits of his own heart his love had never past to make the heaven of his creatures. The Cross of Christ was the breaking of the secret to man. A God who could stoop, a God who could suffer, a God who could die, a God who delivered himself over in actual, tangible sacrifice for the good of his creatures—this is the God the Cross has revealed, and this is the God who without the Cross should have remained for ever an undreamed-of glory. It took sin to build the Cross, and it took the Cross to show us God.

And having tasted the love of God, we feel we have tasted the true water of life. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst"—we begin to understand. We may not yet drink fully or continuously, but we have tasted. It may have been one day only, one hour only, that we stood close beside the everlasting fountain, and drank the cool clear waters, and were satisfied. But that hour is henceforth the royal hour of life. If all the rest of life were dark as a stormy sky at midnight, that hour would be a solitary star amid the blackness. That star no sin can pluck down, no sorrow extinguish. We know henceforth that there is such a thing as rest for the soul of man. We have felt it. One hour we have breathed in the paradise of love, with all its beauties around us. One hour we have touched the end of our being. Beyond that there is nothing—nothing but the perfection and perpetuation of itself. To stand for ever at the fountain-head, and drink its waters as then we drank—this is the everlasting life.

It is a new idea. It is the idea of love. It is the idea of love based on the experience of love. It is the greatest idea which the mind of man can receive.

It is that idea which is the filling up and complement of all the rest—without which all creation sits mateless and widowed, sobbing in the infinite darkness and loneliness. For since the creation exists for love, little wonder the creation without love appears a fragment—a monster—a wild and cruel enigma.

And the man who through the experience of love has reached the idea of love, however partial and imperfect that idea may be, yet looks out upon the world and men, and sees everything in the light of that idea. The world to him lies in the sunshine of love. To the men around him the world is without that sunshine. A theory of life with an experience of the love of Christ, and a theory of life without that experience must be different and contradictory things.

Here in love we form a true judgment of sin. Sin is the negation of love. We hate it with a natural hatred, as a something that shocks and pains and repugnates our better self. And we hate it with an intelligent hatred, as that which carries with it all we have learnt to fear and deprecate—the breaking down of the soul, the blasting of the world.

Here also we form a true judgment of our own immersion in an evil state. There were times when the intolerable anguish of sin and sorrow made us curse the day of our birth, and cry for the day of our death. But that was in the darkness and petulance of ignorance. Now we are wiser. Now we bless God that He made us beings capable of sin, and so capable of love. We have entered on the beginnings of that exceeding glory which makes the past affliction light by contrast. We thank Him that ere we had yet been, and while yet we were unable to judge and choose for ourselves, his kind strong love made such a choice for us, and shrank not from exposing us to

that experience of sin from which through rolling seas of sorrow we should gain the shores of heaven.

All this teaching has its bearing on individual cases. You have past into that state of mind which is called conviction of sin. The law has entered your life that the offence might abound. And you are filled with despair. You see yourself sinful; you see that you cannot deliver yourself from your sinfulness; and you think that because of your sinfulness the pure God must hate you. Now, understand what He is doing with you. He is simply showing you what your heart is—what every heart is without Him. Your conviction of sin is the first chapter in the process of salvation—the dark and stormy beginning of what shall end with the ringing of bells in heaven. Be not ignorant, or bewildered, or despairful. However much the law makes sin to abound in you, be sure that where sin abounds grace does much more abound. The work is all in love. Love commenced it, love sustains it, and love will finish it in glory.

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

Desires.—Man lives by desires. Desires are the golden threads which draw us on to the glory of the future. While the heart lives it must desire. And the man who is caring his own heart will nourish in it certain desires. But herein lies his misery—that while it is in his power to nourish the desire, it is not in his power to satisfy it—that while it is in his power to develop into tremendous strength the creature within him, it is not in his power to supply to it the food for which it craves. And then like some huge hungry bird it flaps and screams amid the intolerable desolation. For there are no vultures that feed upon the heart of man like the vultures of ravenous desire the heart itself has bred.

God's Service is Happiness.—God pleads: "My son, give Me thy heart." But He is no greedy owner who, in the midst of universal empire, covets yet further sway. Not for his own sake, but for thine, He beseeches thee. To be thine own is death!

And some proof of this we find in ourselves. For twenty, for thirty, for forty, for fifty years you have been your own master. And what has been the success of your management? Are you content with the result? You have had a fair trial with your own heart, and how have you succeeded? Let me call your heart a garden, and how does the garden show? Have you been a good gardener? Nay—but we enter the garden together and look around. Where flowers should grow in beautiful abundance, a stray blossom struggles to show itself through masses of tangled weed. The walks that should be smooth and pleasant, are unkempt and grass-grown. Heavy odours of decay drift languidly upon the air. Sad winds sigh in the wasted trees. And this is your garden!

This is your paradise! This is all you have made of yourself! But even as you gaze hopelessly around, there is One who knocks at the gate. He pleads: "My son, give Me thy heart. Let Me in to keep what you yourself have failed to keep. Let Me in, and before my presence the wilderness shall become an Eden!"

Providences General and Particular.—I have met men who did not believe in a *particular* providence, yet they did believe in a *general* providence. But the distinction is only imaginary.

You say: "I do not believe in a particular sunshine, I believe in a general sunshine." Pray, what is a general sunshine that is not a particular sunshine too? Is it a sunshine that visits a land without touching any particular tree or any particular flower?

Or you say: "I believe in a general rain, but not in a particular rain." Is the general rain a rain which will refresh a country without refreshing any particular farm or garden?

Men who want to be more sensible than their fellows often talk great nonsense. The general is only the sum of the particulars. And it is by God's care of every particular that his care of the general results.

Consecration and Usefulness.—God can never really use you till you have made yourself over to his use. In a sense He uses all things. He makes even the wrath of his enemies to praise Him. But this is not the use you desire. You desire something more than to be merely dragged into his service. Then *give* yourself.

What if every soldier in the besieging army had a plan of his own for scaling the walls, and gave all his attention to carry out his plan? What if the will of the general were held of no account? Why, they behind the walls would laugh in mockery. Little danger would they fear from such an enemy. But it is not so in war. Every soldier belongs altogether to his general; he has no will of his own; he is not his own property; his musket, his sword, his helmet—ay, down to the very buttons on his coat and the nails in his boots, he is yielded to another.

The will of the general is the living will that moves the whole army in a compact and united mass.

When the skilled swordsman stands forth to fence, the sword in his hand has no will or plan of its own. If it had—if it should thrust this way or that at its own pleasure, then were he left open to the assaults of his antagonist; but it is absolutely yielded to him, and it moves only with the movement of his will.

Your pen in your hand makes no insurrection against you to accomplish a writing of its own. It is without a will, and the slightest automatic movement in the pen would make it useless to you.

Learn from all this your relation to God. You are not your own. His will, not yours, is to be done in earth and heaven. What may God not accomplish with a man who is entirely yielded to his will!

God's Thoughts.—God's thoughts for us are very far above our askings and thinkings for ourselves. We are like children begging for toys; but He answers us from off his own level, and not on our level. We clamour for joy and peace, while his great thought is to make us God-like. Ah, how little we dream of what God's thoughts would do for us! We are like harps with many strings, but only one or two have yet been touched.

Then, as regards temporal things, I see nothing between Atheism and God in everything. If God is not in the trifles of our lives, the greatest part of our lives is without Him. But He *is* in them, and He is ordering our lives according to his thinking, and not according to ours.

And for our future. People ask, What will heaven be like? Shall we know each other? Don't be afraid. God's heaven will not fall below your idea. As his thoughts are above our thoughts, and as his ways are above our ways, so his heaven will be above our heaven.

OBJECTIONS TO THE ATONEMENT

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—2 Cor. v. 19.

Is it possible to reach the philosophy of the Atonement? Is it possible to apprehend, even in bare outline, how the salvation of men is secured through the death of Jesus Christ?

It has been very usual to answer, No. The result has been that a large number of men in every age, and age by age the number increases, have declined to receive a doctrine which, by the profession of its teachers, is lifted above the level of human intelligence.

I venture to answer, Yes. The day is at hand when the philosophy of the Atonement, at least as much of it as is necessary for the satisfaction of reason, shall be the common property of all intelligent minds. The day is at hand when the Church shall expound the Atonement of Jesus Christ to the world as an expression of great principles of being—principles so profound that their existence has been little more than guessed. I trust to see the time when it shall be accounted unlearned and unscientific to question the Atonement. God has not only intended, but He has commanded that we should grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And the Atonement is designed to be a light for the mind of man, and not an impervious darkness—a clear straight path to God, and not a maze to bewilder our feet, or a quagmire to entangle them.

But I do not propose just now to touch the great subject further than may be necessary for the answer of some current objections—objections which, light as they may appear to some minds, have been stumbling-blocks in the way of others.

1. *It has been objected that in the doctrine of the Atonement God is represented as loving men in consequence of Christ's sacrifice.* If this were true of the intelligent presentation of the Atonement, the objection would be unanswerable. For, as the objectors have argued, if God only loves us because of the sacrifice of Christ, then God was something else than love to us before that sacrifice had taken place; and the mind is hindered from going on to that one great truth which more than everything else it needs—the truth of God's uncaused and eternal and changeless love.

But where has God been so represented by the Atonement? Not certainly in the Scriptures. Here the testimony is distinct and unfaltering. "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son." And this not only at the advent of Jesus Christ into the world, but the purpose to make the gift was in the design of God before the existence of the world on whose behalf the gift was made. Jesus is "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."

We, preachers of the Atonement, instead of being open to the charge of obscuring this truth, are only anxious to take side with our accusers in its enthusiastic proclamation. We believe that any error as to the love of God is hurtful, or even fatal. And we deeply mourn if ever any man has so preached the Atonement as to fill the heavens with the lurid visage of an implacable and bloodthirsty God; or to make their fellows believe that they are hunted along the green world by an inexorable Deity, most of all con-

cerned to pour out on some victim, human or Divine, the burning torrent of his vengeance. We indignantly shake off the imputation that any such notion of God inheres in the doctrine of Atonement. We teach that God is love, and never can be in the future, and never was in the past, anything else or anything less than love. We hold the doctrine of God's eternal love to be the foundation of all our faith and hope. We look back to Calvary, and we teach that long long before its dreadful tragedy, God was love. We look round on the world with all its strength and splendour, and it is our joy to tell that before these things had been, God was love. We look overhead to the firmament, and we declare that before the oldest star had begun to shoot its rays across the darkness, God was love. And if we permit our minds to conceive of a time far back in the infinite past, before the existence of the material universe, and when as yet no creature had been formed, still we think of God as love—love in his own heart, and as his very essential nature.

Let us not then, because we preach the Atonement, be misunderstood or misrepresented as preaching that the love of God had its origin in the sacrifice of Christ. We teach that that sacrifice was made *because* He loved us. We teach that while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. And, further, I hope to make it clear that not only is the truth of God's love not veiled or perverted by the doctrine of the Atonement, but the doctrine of the Atonement is the very means of revealing that truth in all its fulness and lustre.

2. *It has been objected that the doctrine of the Atonement presents the justice of God as a fierce and terrible attribute, distinct from and opposed to his love.*

Shallow thinkers are they who have not yet seen

that justice is but one aspect of love. A God of love, who is the Ruler of the universe, is bound to punish sin. We speak of our judges and magistrates as seated on the bench to administer justice, but a true insight can perceive that their administration of justice is only the administration of love. What judge *hates* the poor wretch that shivers before him? And when he inflicts on him the penalty of his crime, is it not his heartiest wish that the transgressor, by learning the end of transgression, may be turned back to righteousness? Does he not feel that it is the truest love to punish, and that in most cases, to withhold the punishment would be not kindness but cruelty? And that which is love to the criminal is also love to society. What man of all those who are offended by the thought of a justice in God which attaches penalty to sin, would think it love to himself and others should the government of the country abrogate all laws, and virtually say to evil men, Go forth and do your will—none shall dare to make you afraid? Those voices, a moment before loud in remonstrance at the thought of a God who could be so harsh as to punish sin, would they not now be lifted in sudden protest at finding every restraint of crime removed, and themselves surrendered to the power of the wicked? And thus the notion of a righteous Governor of the world, who rewards men according to their works, is in harmony with that notion of earthly government which the good and the wise unite to approve.

The proper statement of the truth is this: God has constructed the world, and what is in it, for the purposes of righteousness. If we observe the natural laws of the body we have health. And that which is true of the body is true of all the rest. So long as we use God's creation as God intended we should use it,

everything flows smoothly on. We are righteous, and so are happy. And in harmony with this truth is the statement of the old writer of the book of Wisdom, "The world fighteth for the righteous."

I stand at the roadside to gaze on a small flower. I think God has laid down certain conditions for the flower, and He has made the flower in harmony with those conditions. It must have the winds to blow on it, and the sun to warm it, and the rain to reach its roots. But if the flower rebel against this arrangement, and close its ducts, and refuse those influences —the flower must die!

And the declaration, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is only a statement concerning man of what is true concerning the flower.

And would we have it otherwise? No good man can wish to believe that the God who sitteth on the circle of earth is a Being indifferent to righteousness. No good man can wish to think that God has so fashioned the world that his creatures may sink into selfishness, and through selfishness into wickedness; may fill the lands with hate and rapine and murder; and yet may find everything so suited to their course of life, that they shall feel themselves in a voluptuous paradise, without anything to hint their sin. This were to be content with a supreme Being, who himself destitute of character, and even of wisdom for the good of his creatures, could build a world for evil, could charter wickedness in his realm, could overwhelm with rewards the villain and the sot. But all this seems to follow that rejection of the justice of God which leads on to the rejection of the Atonement.

Shallow thinkers are they who have not yet seen that justice is but one aspect of love. Because we believe in a God of love, we believe in a God who

rewardeth every man according as his work shall be. But men would have us push from the throne of the universe this pure strong God, and seat there some drivelling sentimental characterless Being, without decision or fortitude (not to say love) sufficient to save his children from their sin by making them feel its pain and terror; some Being who would little concern himself whether love should reign, or hate; and whether his world should be filled with the music of righteousness, or with the steam and din of a voluptuous carnival mingled with shrieks and blood. Did we believe that the God in the heavens is like this, we should grow sick of all things. The primroses of spring-time would braid the world in mockery. The old starry heavens would raise their arches over a world that well might wonder it was worthy of such a roofing. And good men, if under such a rule they could retain their goodness, would only cry for escape —escape! and would crawl gladly into the cells of death as a possible refuge from the very consciousness of existence.

Yet this is what they would have who reject the Atonement of Christ because it involves the thought of a holy God who sets himself inexorably against every form of sin.

3. *It is objected that God would not be righteous in causing the sinless Saviour to suffer for the sinful race.*

To this I answer, He does it every day. The world is filled with those who are suffering for sins which they did not commit. The child is in ignorance and poverty because of a spendthrift and intemperate father; the nation is in disorder or disaster because of a wicked or incompetent ruler. In a sense, the world is filled with vicarious suffering. And it is only needful, to justify the suffering in every case, that the sufferer himself and the world are better for

it. All history and experience declare that the men who have done most for the world have been the men who have suffered most for it; and all history and experience alike declare that the sufferers themselves have been those who have laid up the largest store of spiritual treasure. And these great truths are prominent in the case of Christ. By his suffering He saved a world; "wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him."

And it is also expressly declared that the suffering of Christ was foreseen and chosen by himself. "I have power," He says, "to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." It would be difficult, from the scattered statements of Scripture, to complete the picture of a vindictive God in pursuit of an innocent and unwilling victim whom He strikes down in his misplaced and indiscriminate wrath.

But we have not yet laid hold on the central truth for which this objection calls. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. And that which He suffered by reason of sin, and on behalf of sinners, was not a suffering imposed by God on some other being, but was a suffering which God of his own free choice took home upon himself. He himself of his own will bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Of the amazing philosophy which underlies this statement I have nothing to say here. We are just now concerned only with the great fact. God was in Christ living for us, dying for us, suffering for us. The true scope and meaning of the Atonement is for ever obscured, and its true place in the scheme of things is for ever lost, unless we have in mind the absolute Deity that was in Jesus Christ. Many persons have first allowed that truth to drop away,

and then, viewing Jesus only as a man, they have felt a something wrong in the doctrine of the Atonement. And no wonder. For that one truth which gives to the doctrine its coherence and its majesty is gone. If Christ were only a man, the whole doctrine of the Atonement is monstrous. And I marvel not that it has become monstrous—monstrous in its immorality and incredibility—to those who see Christ only as a man. But let the doctrine of Divine suffering in the Atonement be understood, and not only does this objection of injustice disappear, but there comes out before the mind a conception of love so tender and so magnificent, as illumines creation to its utmost verge, and makes life and death and all things new.

And, briefly, the doctrine of Divine suffering is this. The life of God is a perpetual sacrifice and suffering by reason of sin. The life of God, I say, the eternal life of God in relation to sin, is a perpetual sacrifice and suffering. It is a perpetual sacrifice, for only by the continual gift of his living Spirit does He counteract and repair the continual damage and ruin which result from the transgression of law. It is a perpetual suffering, for his pure mind cannot exist in presence of evil without exquisite pain—just as the ear of the great musician cannot without exquisite pain endure a jangle of inharmonious sounds. But from age to age this sacrifice and suffering go on, that by bearing with evil He may overcome and destroy it. Such is the doctrine of Atonement, set forth in that fullest statement of the doctrine contained in the Old Testament: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

This great truth of God's eternal sacrifice and

suffering through sin is pictured to us in clear lines and vivid colours by Jesus Christ. Had we only heard that God is bearing our sins, we had wondered, and not understood. But our salvation depends on our understanding. Yet how convey the infinite truth into the mind of man? See, the gate of heaven opens! God comes forth clad in human flesh. He weeps, He bleeds, He dies! And this by our sin! This for us! But even as we wonder, a voice declares, "This is what I have been doing all along; this is the Lamb slain before the foundations of the world."

At a place on the west coast of Ireland you stand beside what seems to your eye a small lake enclosed by hills. But it is not a lake; it is only the top of a long inlet from the Atlantic, which stretches into the land for miles. Of the main ocean you see nothing; of the long course of the inlet you see nothing; you see only the small spread of water at your feet. And yet that small piece of water is one with the veritable Atlantic, and beats with its pulses, and shakes with its storms. It is, as it were, but a drop from the infinite ocean, manifested to you amid these surrounding hills.

Such is the life of Christ projected into our humanity—all we can see of the infinite life of God, and truly and absolutely one with it. And such is the sacrifice in the life of Christ—a hint and manifestation of God's eternal sacrifice for the salvation of his creatures. The true sacrifice for sin is in the Divine nature.

Away, then, with the puny objection which ignorance and unbelief have raised against this glorious truth—that it is unjust to make the sinless suffer for the sinful. It is my God himself who turns the penalty of my sin away from me, and draws

it in upon his own heart. Is it unjust for a man to spend himself, and to sacrifice himself for those he loves? Do we call that man unjust who, when he sees his friend perishing in the river, springs from the bank in noble self-forgetfulness, and risks his life that he may save him? Was John Howard unjust because he gave away a life in long devotion to the good of those wretches who lay rotting in our prisons? Was the Apostle Paul unjust because, with high reputation and a brilliant career opening before him, he counted all but loss, and his life itself not dear unto him, if only he might testify the gospel of the grace of God? Unjust! Then must all the morality of the world be changed. The just men have been the hard and the selfish, and those who have lived most neglectful of the wants and sorrows of others. We have all along been mistaken. The ancient world was wrong to admire the friendship of Damon and Pythias. The modern world is wrong to admire the self-denying heroism of a Livingstone. Those sweet acts of tender care and solicitude—of tender care and uncompromising self-devotion to the good of others, which strike right home to our hearts, and make the tears gather thick in our eyes as we hear of them—all these are mistakes. Even to this monstrous conclusion are we hunted by the men who object against the sacrifice of Christ that it was unjust. If that sacrifice was, as we believe it was, the sacrifice of very God himself on our behalf, then, instead of being an injustice, it takes its place at the top, and far away above the highest of those examples of nobleness and love which men in all ages have looked upon as the fairest flowers this humanity of ours has produced. And thus indeed it stands, as justified by its results. For what was it that lent such a strength to Christianity in its earliest history, and

sent it out like a rushing mighty wind upon the world —a wind so strong that in the course of a century or two it had blown down and swept away the immense fabrics of heathen superstition—what was it but this, that the gospel is the story how God so loved men that He died for them? And what is it that yet gives to Christianity that supreme vitality which keeps it in ever-growing health and strength, in spite of the rage of foes and the faults of friends, so that to-day it stands amid the religions of the world the only one which is vigorously developing its inward power and its outward influence—what is it but this, that it is the story how God so loved men that He died for them? And, once more, what makes the Gospel come home to individual hearts—the hearts of the sinful, the hearts of the weary, the hearts of men in sorrow, and men in sickness, and men in the shadow of death, with that surprising power and consolation which nothing else has ever yet equalled or approached —what is it but this, that it is the story how God so loved men that He died for them? Unjust! Nay; the page of history, the experience of the present, and the deepest voices in the heart, all unite to refute it.

I have thus dealt with some of the objections made to the doctrine of Atonement for sin. And the examination, brief as it is, of these objections only helps us better to understand the doctrine, and closer to love it. That such objections exist is largely due to the miserably inadequate apprehension of what the Atonement means which has been common even among Christian men. And with the appearance and adoption of a truer science of the Atonement, these objections, and a host of others, will quietly cease. For that day we wait, and meanwhile we are not ashamed to teach what so many, misunderstand-

ing it, cover with scorn. All that is in us of heart and brain unite to cry: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

We enter the sculptor's studio. Yonder statue has just come forth in perfect beauty of outline under his inspired hand. We mark the tender repose of the face, and the serene beauty of the graceful limbs. We gaze, we criticise, we admire. But that is all. Our affections are not touched, our enthusiasm is not fired. But now the sculptor's sister enters, and stands with us. Her face it is which her brother's art has transferred to the marble. We look from one face to the other. The beauty in the marble is cold and rigid; the beauty of the woman is lighted with soul, and changes with every change of the mind within. In the marble form there is neither life nor thought; in the woman's form beats a true strong heart with the very life that comes from God. We have known her for years. We have known her faith, and her patience, and her courage, and her devotion. *Her* beauty *does* fire our enthusiasm and kindle our love. With how different feelings we behold the woman and the statue!

I have always thought of the presentation of Christianity from which are omitted the Deity and Atonement of Christ, as of a graceful and beautiful statue side by side of that living and lovely woman which might represent the Christianity which retains these doctrines. Cut out the Deity and the Atonement of Christ, and you cut out the *heart* of the Gospel. What remains is beautiful in outward appearance as a system of the most perfect morality; it is beautiful, but it is cold and dead. And indeed this is a common lament with those who have done it. They see around them in the churches a life, a warmth, and a vigour which they themselves as

vainly endeavour to produce as the sculptor might endeavour to make his statue breathe and speak.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." It is not wonderful that the time of conversion should so often be a season of tumultuous joy, for this great change is the occasion when the mind first apprehends the wonderful relation which God has assumed to us, and the truth that God loves us with a love so real as is expressed in the fact that He took flesh and died for us. The man who sees this walks in a new world. "God died for me!" is the truth that fills his heart. And if God died for me—for *me*, with all my sin and weakness and worthlessness—what a being He must be! If only Christ was God expressed in flesh, how good it is to live, and how bearable are all our pains and sorrows. If there really is such a love as this in the heavens—a love so mild and sweet—a love not only approachable, but which seeks us out and asks us to accept it—a love which goes on patiently suffering for us, and looks for no reward but the reward of leading us at last into the blessedness of being like itself—O if there really is such a love as this, how safe we are, how safe is the world! For if this love is the love of God, and so is united with the power of God, the power of God is on our side. And God had never used his power to create us if, when created, his power had been insufficient to care for us. And so everything is safe, and so everything is good—"All things are working together for good." Let the storm roar, let the rain fall, let the dim fog cover the lands: *above*, there is eternal sunshine and perennial summer. If only God died for me, if only God was in Christ, all is well.

Take this truth and keep it. It is yours. If hitherto you have lived without it, you have hitherto lived without your birthright. God died for you;

that is your birthright. To be without the knowledge of that is to be yet a poor man. To have that knowledge is to be rich, although forsaken of the world, stretched in a garret, dying in a workhouse. Let us ask of God to reveal it to us, for it is the Spirit that beareth witness with our hearts that we are the children of God. Take this truth and keep it. It will be within you the secret of a new life. It will make trouble and sorrow easy. It will hunt back to the dark den from whence it came that fear of death which has troubled you. It will create in you the hatred of all that is base and sinful, and the love of all that is pure and Godlike. It will clear your intellect, and will lead you to such wide and dignifying views of existence as without it cannot be gained. It will purify and multiply the pleasures which have their source in this world, and it will open new sources of pleasure that will overbrim continually, and flow down in rivers from the very right hand of God. It will give you the secret of that peace which passes understanding. It will supply a new motive, and a new power, and a new object for life. It will consecrate all your forces and all your possessions, and will make all subserve to the real blessing of your fellowmen, and the glory of your God. It will hallow life so that looking away behind at the path you have trod, you will behold the long line of Ebenezers which your hands have piled to show that God has been helping you all along. And as you draw on to the end of your journey, as the life within you creeps feebler and feebler, and the outward man decays, that inner man, which has been forming by God through all, will begin to glow with increased vigour. As the outward step drags slower, the inner step will spring with fresher elasticity across the green pastures and beside the still waters; as the outer

eye dims, the inner eye, with keener stronger vision, shall search from its Pisgah height across into the Canaan before. Then, in that supreme hour, you will know that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life, and that you go on to dwell in the house of your God for ever. And in the presence of that change of death which once seemed great as some wide turbulent river, but which then shall seem as a brooklet over which you but step into the better land, the truth that gladdened and strengthened your life will be as the rod and staff of God to comfort you in the valley of the shadow of death. "God died for me!" "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." It will be enough. You will ask no more. You will need no more. The everlasting arms will be underneath and around. You will lean back on them. They will carry you through. And, perchance, like another servant of God, the latest accents on your lips may be—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me!"

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

Responsibility.—There is one thing that is not God's. Wide as his dominion stretches there is a dominion it does not include. The sea is his, and He made it. The winds are his, and He guides them with the string of law. The firmament is his, and He calls the stars by their names. But on the domain of thy heart, O man, thy God intrudes not against thy will. He hath made thee master of thyself. Thou art thy own—to make thyself his.

On Doing.—Action is good when in the will of God. Apart from the will of God it is vain and confusing. It is a result of great grace to know when and how to act for God. We do much for God, as we think, but we are really endeavouring to serve ourselves. Whatever I do for God which is not done from God, and in God, and to God, is in some respects useless, in some respects injurious. But action with God is strong and sublime. The sower does not cast his seed anywhere at all, but on the place that has been chosen and prepared. In the field of God's providence He is evermore making ready places where we should sow our effort. Sown there it bears a harvest; sown elsewhere it is well-nigh wasted.

And the law of doing in God comprehends all things. Everything that should be done at all should be done in God. Household duties and business duties are occasions for his service, if we will but embrace them. Life is a great temple, and the altar rises everywhere before us.

O Lord, help me to understand aright thy service. Open mine eyes, that I may see what Thou callest me to do, and mine ears, that I may hear when Thou callest. Help me to unite all the vagrant streams of my effort, and let nothing be small in my sight. May labour flow from love, and return to love again. The past has been wasted, O Lord; make the future divine in Thyself.

Love.—Conceive of a world hanging in space—dark, barren, empty. And it thinks to itself, "What shall I ask for that I may be a beautiful world? I shall ask to be covered with grass." And a voice answers to it, No. "For what shall I ask, then—trees and flowers?" And the voice again says, No! Ask for the sun. When you have the sun you will have all the rest too.

So with us. We pray for this and we pray for that. An old German divine says: "*Ask for love.*" And when we have love we have all that is lovely.

But how to get love. You can't lay your hand on your heart and turn it round to love God; but you can give Him your service. It is impossible to keep walking in obedience and trust without arriving at love. While I say this I believe in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But that baptism will come on those who are prepared by obedience. Two farmers live side by side; one labours steadily at his land; the other is indolent, and does little. When there comes a year of great abundance which of the farmers will profit most by it?

Give yourself to do Christ's will; get ready for the baptism. It will come. *Your life will yet be one long existence in love.*

Christ the Head.—Men make no end of mistakes in thinking they are self-sufficient beings. They are not self-sufficient. You were intended to have no existence separate from God. God should think through you, will through you, love through you. Look at your hand. Has it any separate life of its own? Its life is from your brain and heart. So Christ is the head, and you are a member with no life but his.

But people rest satisfied with conversion, and they ask nothing further. Like a man who has had a large estate left him, and yet he stops short at the gate-lodge; and he is so content with the gate-lodge that he never goes on to the house at all. So people say: "Filled with the fulness of God—Oh, that is for the saints above." No, it is for *us—here—now.*

PHILOSOPHY OF THE ATONEMENT—IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Who of God is made unto you . . . Righteousness."—1 Cor. i. 30.

The Atonement has two distinct sides.

The first stands in the realm of idea. It is known by different names—Satisfaction, the Legal side, Imputed righteousness. And it is an Atonement in the realm of pure idea for the wrong and offence which sin has committed there.

The second has to do with the universe of actual existence. It has been called Sacrifice, Propitiation, Restitution. And in the universe of actual existence it is an atonement and setting right again in relation to the havoc and disorder made by sin.

With the first only of these two sides of the Atonement do we now concern ourselves. And representing it by the term "Imputed righteousness," we proceed to ask for the philosophical meaning covered by the term. But on the way to this let us see what the term means in its popular use.

Under the preaching of Christianity a sense of sinfulness is a common experience. Persons are brought to recognise a law of right in their hearts, which is higher than their thoughts and motives and actions; and by this law the life within and the life without are condemned together. They are filled with degradation and self-contempt, and the broken law threatens them with the fear of penalty. And when they think of themselves as in the view of God, they

feel that the great pure God must loathe and abhor their sinfulness much more than they themselves.

To persons in this state the preaching of the Gospel is usually to this effect: You now see yourself sinful —you see that your whole heart and life are not in obedience to the law of perfect love. But God has seen you all along as you now for the first time see yourself. He has foreseen your case, and He has provided for it. He has given his Son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life for you, and then to ascend into the heavens. And to you, who have no righteousness of your own, He imputes the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Reckon that God sees you in Christ—reckon that you in Him, though not in yourself, are dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. Lose sight of yourself, and realise your completeness in the complete Saviour!

And this teaching has for ages been followed by the same result—a result which has seemed to witness either one of two things: that the teaching itself is true to the needs of the spirit within us; or, if the teaching be false, that a falsehood has the power of satisfying in millions of cases, and these cases scattered over different countries and centuries, the very deepest cry for help that has ever issued from the human soul. For in reliance on this imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, men have felt themselves justified without the deeds of the law; and they have stepped out from their degradation into a peace which has been marked at once by the boldness of its confidence, and the depth of its humility. And it is not too much to affirm that a large majority of the best and wisest men in Christendom have lived and died in this faith, proving it sufficient in death as they had proved it sufficient in life; and that a large majority of the best

and wisest men now in the world, hold in some form or other, and rest upon in some form or other, the great truth of Imputed righteousness.

What, then, is the philosophical statement of this great truth?

A good and wise God must have created man in view of his ultimate perfection and blessedness. It would seem impossible that a God of love could have brought man into existence if his highest destiny were only the best this world has shown. To form any being for a continued existence with the imperfection of its own nature, would be to fasten around it the clinging curse of endless unrest. This our Father in heaven has not done. And with these statements agree the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, that God created man in his own image, and that men are the sons of God.

But if we say that God has not created man to be for ever an imperfect creature, at war with himself and with the universe where he is placed, we thereby say that God has created him in view of some ultimate perfection and blessedness—that God has created him in view of an ideal man. And if we include the testimony of Scripture just quoted, we may call this ideal man a god-like man; and we may say that God has created man in view of an ideal godlike man.

Now the doctrine of Imputation belongs to every case where imperfectness is being developed to some ideal perfectness. No intelligent mind can be satisfied with imperfectness, and no intelligent mind can endure imperfectness, except as it beholds the imperfectness leading on to perfectness.

The great shipbuilder steps forth into his yard, and looks around him. There are the vast skeletons of ships just commenced—there are others advancing to their completion. But there is nothing in the

scene to satisfy. The big hulls are at present good for nothing; a thousand hammers are tapping in vexatious discord; the miry ground is strewn with wood and iron. And yet the owner stands content amid the imperfection. He never thinks of even doubting the process he beholds. In his mind he carries the ideal of a perfect ship, and he justifies the imperfect ships by imputing to them that ideal.

In no other way could God endure the imperfectness of the human race. The human race is imperfect—it is of necessity imperfect, but He through the imperfectness is bearing it on to its glorious destiny. And He is continually imputing to the race his ideal godlike man, and by this imputation He is continually justifying its present condition.

But there are two eyes looking on man: God is looking on man, and man is looking on himself. And it is not enough that God see a joy set before man, unless man himself also see the joy set before him. Indeed the joy set before man by God is contingent on his seeing it, for unless he see it he cannot realise it. Without a view of his destiny, and of the Power that is bearing him on to his destiny, the destiny itself can never be attained. For in those dark hours when the knowledge of a purity above him has revealed his own impurity, there is nothing for him but self-abomination and despair, if he is unable to hope for deliverance from his present state, and into that highest of which he has conceived.

But how is the eye of man to receive the truth already seen by the eye of God? And when I say "man," let us understand what the word represents. It represents the men and women who make up the race—the men and women as they actually have been and are—some old and some young, some rich and some poor, some learned and

some ignorant. In this great multitude a few have always been fitted by gifts and culture for large reaches of philosophic thought and imagination. But the greater number have always been incapable of seeing clearly and of holding strongly, where the seeing and holding must be done by abstract thought. In presence of the manhood attained by a few, the mass of men have seemed like children; and he who would reach them must reach them by bending to their childhood. As a race we do not want deep thought or wide views; we want Truth before us, in bold strokes and bright hues. These we can see and understand.

How then, I ask again, is the eye of man—the eye of this great ignorant unthinking multitude—to perceive the truth of his glorious destiny?—that truth which rests on the wide, the abstract, and to most of us even yet the inapprehensible, principle of love. For this he must see to justify to himself his own imperfect life, and escape from the misery and degradation of conscious impurity.

Into the yard of the shipbuilder we lead a savage who has never seen a sea or a ship. He gazes on the monstrous frames around him, and he wishes to know their use. Give him the ideal in the mind of the shipbuilder. You cannot, he is unable to receive it. Then carry out the tiny model of a finished vessel, and make it float on the water before him. Now he has the idea.

Christ our Righteousness is our ideal destiny in the mind of God, set down on the level of our apprehension, and rendered in a term we can understand. God's ideal has become real in Jesus Christ. So real has it become, that he who has dreamt highest of moral beauty and excellence, has still felt the character of Jesus Christ beyond his dream. And without

any display of inner meanings, the Gospel has simply announced that this great perfect Being has become the Righteousness of the unrighteous. And every man who feels himself impure is invited, is commanded, to cover himself with the perfect righteousness of Christ, and to believe that in that righteousness he is accepted before God. The result is justification. The soul sees itself in Christ, pure in its own sight, and pure in the sight of God. In the concrete form of Jesus Christ, it has received the great abstract ideal in the mind of God.

And this presentation, this mediatorship of Christ, is an adaptation to the limits of the human thought. I do not wish to be understood that when a mind has reached the great ideal of God, through the presentation in Christ, it is then done with the presentation in Christ. Far from this. To see the philosophical meaning of that presentation is good for us, especially is it good for us in a day when the truth of Imputed righteousness is flouted as an old wives' fable. But the man who has most deeply entered into the philosophy, still feels that the philosophy is not enough for him. He wants the warm and living Christ as much as ever. As much as ever he feels the need of burying the consciousness of his own imperfection in Him who is the righteousness of God. Back from the lofty watch-tower of reason, whence he saw in the deep illimitable night the far faint shinings of eternal law—back he comes again to lay his head upon the bosom of his loving Saviour.

That what I have said may be plainer, I proceed to add some reasons for the Imputation of righteousness.

1. *A man is, in the truest sense, what he wishes to be.* In the moral judgment will stands for deed. A judge acquits the prisoner before him of the foulest crime when once it is seen that his hand without his

will was guilty. We thank a friend as if he had really helped us when, with tears in his eyes, he tells us he would do it if he could. To the boy labouring earnestly at his studies, the teacher imputes a success of which he has come short by no deficiency of his own. The will stands for the deed.

It is so before God. A man surveys his own life where the selfish motive starts for ever into a hateful rule, and he surveys the life of Jesus Christ where the calm strong love of God and his will control everything into beauty; and he desires that he might cease to be himself, and become like Jesus Christ. With all his faculty of admiration he approves the excellence of Jesus Christ, and with all his faculty of choice he elects it for his own.

But a man is in the truest sense what he wishes to be. Look on him who is bound in a dungeon, and is he responsible for breathing the malaria of his prison, for bearing the gyves that cling to his limbs, for the loss of friends and sunlight and liberty? His situation does not represent his choice. But when a slender pencil of sunbeam pierces his cell, he thinks of the landscape drenched in the splendour of noontide, and that represents his choice; and when the wind blows about the towers of his prison, he thinks of the free mountains where the same wind is brushing the golden broom, and that represents his choice; and when the laughter of a child rings from the court below, he thinks of his own babes, and their sad mother, and his dear home, and that represents his choice. Take the man at his will, and he is free. By no act of his own do the stone walls close him for another hour.

You—what would you not give to-day for freedom from all that is evil and base? You have seen out into the glorious liberty of the children of God, as it has

been pictured in the glad spontaneous service of Jesus Christ, and you have chosen it. In your heart the black defiling touch of self is marked on every thought and feeling, but you hate it. If God's angel stood with you to-day, and cried, Choose what you will of blessing! back would leap your fervent answer, Give me Christlikeness! Thus in the very highest sense you are Christlike. For all that is deficient concerns the power only, and not the will. And when God imputes to you the righteousness of Christ, and calls upon you to impute it to yourself, He only asks you to save yourself from the falsehood that you are not like Christ, and to rise into the truth that in the highest sense you are.

2. *The man who thus imputes to himself the righteousness of Christ is in progress to be like Him not only in will but also in fact.* This is the teaching of the New Testament. The command to reckon yourself dead unto sin and alive unto God by imputation of Jesus Christ is followed in the next breath by the command to mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. The conclusion that the believer is already risen in Christ is followed by the call to set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The New Testament proposes to man a something vastly more than to be merely saved by imputation. And the commands and exhortations to practical holiness lead naturally on to the announcement that holiness shall yet be achieved. The followers of Jesus Christ are not always to limp sadly in the ways of righteousness. A time comes when man shall be delivered from the sway of evil, and the bondage of corruption. Our Saviour has given himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity; and He is to reign till He hath put all enemies under his feet.

And we know that the love of God could do no otherwise. God, we have already said, cannot fashion beings for endless imperfection. The mere fact that in the course of development in which He has placed us, there has arisen the ideal of Christ's character, and the ability in us to apprehend it and to love it and to long for it, proves that we are created for that ideal. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," is the expression of an universal and eternal principle. No animal hungers for anything, but the kind mother, Earth—so kind because the good God has kissed his love into her—sets the two side by side. The lonely places of the mountains have never heard the shriek of a wandering bird searching for the food it craves but which earth affords not. And every true appetite in man tells of a something to be found and enjoyed. For if it were not so, then should we behold ourselves in the hands of a God who could create us for the misery of hopeless thirst. The poets painted Tantalus in hell surrounded with the clear sparkling water he could not drink, overhung by drooping boughs laden with cool delicious fruit he could not taste. But the good Father never made such a destiny for his creatures. He never endowed man with a nature like his own that his very godlikeness might be his curse. Let who will believe this, I cannot. To make this true is to make everything else false. To set this up is to shake down the very pillars on which all things rest. For our God does not win us to cry out for himself, that then He may withdraw from our search into the impenetrable recesses of his eternity. If all voices in earth and heaven declared this, they must be wrong. If all voices declared this, we should wait, till their tumult had died away, to hear the voice of our Father

whisper his soft "I AM!" from the top of the eternal throne. The cry in our hearts after Him is the pledge that we are made to possess Him.

3. *And the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is the very means by which we are becoming like Christ.* To understand as clearly as possible how practical righteousness is attained by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, let me first ask, What is that practical righteousness which it is our highest hope to reach?

If you answer: It is to be righteous in all the relations of life, so that our whole conduct shall wear the aspect of a stainless virtue—then we may perhaps do without the Gospel of Imputation. For it is at least conceivable that a man may become perfectly virtuous without it.

But if you answer: The righteousness I seek is not a righteousness subsisting in mere virtue, but a righteousness which shall flow out fresh and living from a heart of love—then the Gospel of Imputation is the Gospel you need.

And the Bible ideal for man is, that he shall love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind; to which the New Testament adds the teaching that a love like this is the fulfilling of every law, and contains within itself all virtue, as the greater contains the lesser.

In order, then, to the salvation of man, he must have a perfect love to God. And the question of man's salvation becomes the simple question, How can he be brought to love? When he loves he is saved.

To win the love of man, God can be presented to him in two ways. Let us judge as to which of the two is best adapted to succeed.

You may set forth God as the infinite Father.

You may teach men that this Being loves them, and is seeking their good. You may point them upward to his great inconceivable Godhead, and you may tell them to love Him.

But to what do you point them? To what I have called his inconceivable Godhead. For of his Godhead the mind can form no sharp and lucid image. You tell them to love Him, but what are they to love? They cannot *think* Him, and how much less can they love Him. This was the God who was preached to the Jews for centuries, and not even with all the anthropomorphism which gathered about the name of God, did the preaching succeed. And we know the same preaching must fail now and fail always. For the human mind can only love what is tangible to the imagination, and this the thought of the infinite Father can never be.

There is another way of presenting God to men, and this is, as I believe, the way of the Gospel. God becomes incarnate in Jesus Christ. To the human mind there is offered a human thought of God. For the human mind could really receive no other. And the image of God becomes as clear before us as the image of a husband or a brother.

And now let us note the manner in which the human God comes into relation with us. I do not at present speak of his sacrifice for sin, but only of his relation to us as our righteousness. You are taught that He loves you, and has given himself for you. You are taught that his great perfectness has become yours, and that you are to hide your imperfectness beneath its faultless beauty. You do it; you believe that He is made unto you righteousness: you believe that you have become the righteousness of God in Him. But every day you feel the sin and weakness of your heart, and every day you are driven to a

fresh and an ever fresh realisation of that perfect Righteousness which is yours. You look up to the white throne of judgment, and you see yourself before that throne clad in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And when the cry is made: Who is He that condemneth?—from the very centre of the dazzling light peals out the answer: It is God that justifieth!

Let me ask for the results which, by the laws of the human mind, must follow from this realisation.

We have already seen that by this imputation the heart is delivered from the misery and self-contempt which are themselves impassable bars to its progress. The man who sees himself in Jesus Christ is justified before himself; and filled with elastic gladness he is prepared to bound forward in the way of God's commandment.

And yet with this gladness is mingled no pride or exaltation of self. He is in no danger of being puffed up as if he had become some great one. He feels that he is nothing. Taken separate from Christ his whole life is evil. His very trust in the righteousness of Christ is based on mistrust in himself.

More still, this continual contact of the mind with a character it loves, must have the tendency to deepen its appreciation of the character, and to deepen its distaste for everything that is opposed to the character. It is simply impossible that the mind should identify itself with a righteousness it loves, and at the same time should love and practise unrighteousness; for this would be to indulge in mutually destructive desires, and to engage in mutually destructive choices. And so the continual union with the pure Saviour in that wonderful union which enables a man to feel that in Him he is dead unto sin and alive to God, has the tendency to estab-

lish the actual state of death unto sin and life unto God, through all his moral being.

But more still, and here I reach the central point of all. We have seen that the great need of man's condition is that he love God. In this union of faith he is brought close to God in Christ. And he finds this God loving him with a love which stoops to death for his salvation. He finds that all sweetnesses and tendernesses of the human heart are only poor wandering fragrances from the love of Christ. And every hour he stands before all judgment clothed with the character of this Being to whom he has learnt to cling. His cry is:

> "Other refuge have I none,
> Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

And what, by the laws of mind, must be the result of this living contact? It must surely have the effect of fixing, and of daily fixing with increasing force and intensity, the love upon Jesus Christ. And it is just here the great enigma of man's salvation is solved. He is brought to love God in Christ. He is won to that supreme affection which, wherever it appears, begins by its sublime nature to burn up the life of selfishness. A love which for clearness of object, and depth and heat of sentiment could never have been produced by any presentation of the infinite Father, is here produced by the Father presented in the human Son. For the Father would for ever have been over our grasp in the width and height of his inconceivable Godhead; but the Son is down among us, is one with us, loving us with a love we can see, living for us with a life we can see, dying for us with a death we can see—One who moves with us in close human brotherhood, whose face is the face of one of ourselves, and his eyes soft with the very tears that we ourselves are shedding.

And answering to the love of this human God, a love which yet only manifests to us the infinite eternal love we could not have guessed, there is awakened in man that love which is the fulfilling of the law—that love which is salvation. The love of Christ constraineth us, so that we no longer live to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again. Our unrighteousness was the result of living for ourselves; our righteousness is the result of living for God.

The doctrine of Imputed righteousness has been much misunderstood and misrepresented. It has been called a delusive fiction, because it asserts that to be true which is not true. But we have seen that the fiction of Imputed righteousness is really a higher truth. And this truth rests on something beyond Church dogmas or even Scripture texts. It rests on eternal principles, which the common sense of every man can verify for himself. And I scarcely see how any mind can examine the grounds of the doctrine and then escape believing it.

But whatever you may think of the theory of the doctrine, few can question its power. When the repenting sinner meets us with the cry: What must I do to be saved? it is only a cold thing to answer: Leave off your sins; break old habits; cultivate new habits; develop righteousness in your heart! How different the answer: Behold Jesus Christ; God has made Him to you righteousness—believe it, and strive to be henceforth in yourself what you are already before God in Him! Think of the different effects of these two messages. In the one case you turn the eye on the imperfection within; in the other case you turn the eye on the perfection without. Which view will supply the nobler stimulus? In the

one case you throw the man down like a settler in a new country, and you say: Clear a spot, and build a house for yourself!—a house which could only be a poor log-house after all. In the other case you say: Behold the eternal palace of God's righteousness, finished and ready for you—enter in, and abide here for ever!

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

Consider the Lilies.—This cold December night let me take you out among the lilies. I have sailed on a river in Switzerland which was covered with the white and golden lilies, all beautiful in the sunlight. We used to gather them into the boat in multitudes. I would I had a wreath of them here, that I might lift up their beauty before you and say, "Consider the Lilies!" Yet it was not to our European lily the Saviour pointed, but to one of the common flowers of Palestine. The words might, perhaps, be better Englished: "Consider the daffodils!" Well, you go out into the fields in spring-time, and you consider the daffodils. Then you bring home with you the results of this sweet consideration, to be a treasure always. You realise the poet's words:

> "For oft when on my couch I lie
> In vacant or in pensive mood,
> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude;
> And then my heart with pleasure fills,
> And dances with the daffodils."

Their life is free from labour; the Saviour says, "They toil not, they spin not." The repose of a flower is perfect. We men exercise ourselves laboriously, but it is needless—nay, it defeats its own end. We are not to be idle, but we are to work with God. Every hour should bring its task, and that should be done easily and lightly. Then God's providence takes all the labour from us. So of the inner life. While we toil to make ourselves perfect, or to advance our spiritual growth, our work is fruitless. It begins to be fruitful when we look continually to God, and expect Him to live in us. "Consider the lilies!" And how free from anxiety! No fretting of their lives with that trembling outlook for unknown evils. O, let us be flowers! Let us leave everything with our good Father—

everything for the life without, everything for the life within.

The result of the flower's quiet walk with God, up to all the flower's possibilities of such a walk, is, that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Who was Solomon? The great king—the great wise king—the great rich king—the great powerful king. If any man could have provided himself with matchless raiment, that man was Solomon. He might have had a robe crusted with diamonds. Yet, with all the earth at his command, he could not, in Jesus' opinion, dress himself like a flower. Hear this, ye fine folk in jewels and laces. God turns away from you all to walk out among his flowers. "Consider the lilies." God will make your life in this world perfect and lovely, if you but cease from your own toil. He may not make it perfect in the eyes of those who prefer Solomon's dress to the flower's—in the eyes of those whose pure taste is gone, but in the eyes of God and of heaven. And your inner life too! O, come down and be a flower. Be lovely, be fragrant, walk with God amid the crowd of lilies that bow with his wind and sparkle in his sunshine. And you, a lily, shall have a lily's end. "For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Your autumn will come, and the place which once knew you shall know you no more for ever. But enough for us to feel that God has another garden, a land of perfect bliss. In that garden may you, his flower, expand into a higher life!

God only Holy.—There are two ways of feeling one's sinfulness. One is like having a stone hung round your neck to sink you into the sea; the other is like being given silver wings wherewith to fly up into heaven. You will never be right till you feel that your sinfulness is a *necessary* part of your existence here. You must be *content* to be sinful. All holiness is in Christ—not in you. You can have no holiness except as you are living in Him and by Him. You were never meant to live separate from God. Think of a flower trying to live by itself and separate from the earth.

The sun is the centre of our system, and the planets

shine by him. Blot him out, and all is darkness. God is the centre of the universe of goodness. All who are good are good by him. Blot Him out, and all is hell. You and the archangel depend on Him alike.

Only God is holy. Holiness is a river so great that it can be born only in the mountains of the infinite. Yet people say: "O, we are so bad!" Well, what do you expect to be? Do you want to have two Gods, and yourself one of them?

PHILOSOPHY OF THE ATONEMENT—SACRIFICE

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."—Isa. lxiii. 9.

Whatever is true to nature is susceptible of philosophical statement. That the atoning death of Christ is true to the highest nature of things, no one who believes in that death can question. There must, then, be an actual connection in the very nature of things between the sin of man and the sacrifice of Christ. There must be a reason in the very nature of things why the sacrifice atones for the sin. What is the connection?—what is the reason? I do not say that we are to make our understanding of the sacrifice a condition of believing it. I do not say that we cannot believe without understanding, for millions have done it. But I do say that if we can understand we shall be wiser and stronger men.

In the narrow space at my command I can do little more than sketch a theory of the Atonement. Crude and imperfect as it may be, I am sure it points at least in the direction of the truth. Crude and imperfect as it may be, my own mind, weary and dissatisfied with current explanations, has perceived it with inexpressible gratitude. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is no longer a dogma to be held with uncertain hands and proclaimed with uncertain lips. It is a

truth which stands in the nature of things. To question it is to question all.

1. *Our first thought is* Law. There is in all the universe an invariable order. A certain cause is always followed by a certain effect. It is impossible that under precisely the same conditions the same event should occur twice over with varying results. And the results of each action are suited to that action, and are married to it in a marriage that nothing can divide. God hath joined them together.

Few will be found to doubt that the whole constitution of things around us is adapted to the moral order. There are things which our moral sense approves, and these things tend to the well-being of man as an individual and as a society. There are things which our moral sense disapproves, and these things tend to hurt and damage. And thus it is true, not only that the transgression of every physical law is attended with its fitting result of penalty, but also that the transgression of every moral law is attended with its fitting result of penalty—a penalty which often extends from the moral domain in which the offence was committed, and into the physical domain without.

Now the top law is Love. There is nothing else which the moral sense so constantly and so universally approves. We feel that to be true to love is always good. He is depraved indeed who has not left in his heart one single string which trembles into music at the touch of love. A herd of rough boys swept from the streets can be moved and thrilled by some tale of forgiveness and sacrifice. Wherever the moral nature exists, even in its rudest development, the heart swings round to love, as the new magnet yields its first unerring obedience to the magnetic law. The top law is love. To be true to

love is to be true to all the moral order. And so the New Testament declares, "All the law is fulfilled in love."

But if our moral sense approves the law of love, our moral sense also convicts us of disobedience to that law. Love is the supreme order of the moral world, and we have been called to love God with our whole heart, but we can see for ourselves that our life has not been lived out from the controlling impulse of love. And when our moral sense is enlightened from above, the distance at which we stand beneath the law increases, till at last the tremendous summit seems to lose itself in the blinding light of heaven. For we perceive that to keep the law of love, not only in our deeds and words, but farther back in our thoughts, and still farther back in our desires, and still farther back in that innermost nature of the soul where resides the determining power of all—would be a something almost dreadful in its celestial purity.

But if the moral nature is fitted to the universe, and if the topmost law of the moral nature is love, it follows that the effect of keeping the law of love and the effect of neglecting the law of love cannot be the same. And if the result of keeping the law of love is order, the result of neglecting the law of love must be disorder. That is, for every transgression of the law of love there is a penalty.

This disorder, the penalty of the broken law of love, will appear in the natural world, so far as the natural world is susceptible of influence from the moral condition of man. And if we think of the world as fashioned by One who foresaw the moral condition of the creature who would inhabit it, and for whom it was created—by One who would naturally adapt the world beforehand to the actual condition of its occupant, we find it easy to recognise around us in

the world the penalties of the broken law—that is, the penalties administered before the occurrence of the transgression, and yet resulting from that transgression as foreseen. Then we see a reason of the statement in Genesis that the earth shall bear thorns and briers as a result of sin. Then too we find the secret of many a mysterious ordinance. Death moving about among the brute creation long before the hour of man's first sin, we yet track down to that hour as to the lair from whence he issued on his terrible mission. We understand why pain and sorrow have been woven into the very texture of the world. We see where the autumn found that shrill sad pipe through which, in our yellowing woodlands, she seems to utter the music of some indescribable sadness in ourselves. We match the loud braying of winter's stern trumpet with something else in the soul as real and as shadowy. The wild unrest in nature reflects the wild unrest in man.

The penalty of the broken law will appear in our bodies. In obedience to the selfish principle within him, or in some way as a result of that principle, man has put his body to unnatural uses, and his body has become weakened and diseased. The body was not made to be the home of impurity, and impurity has fouled it. The body was not made to hold the fires of envy and malice, and the fires have scorched and blackened it. The body was not made for the gnawing of viperous cares, and the tender tissues have been wasted. The body was not made for the unhealthy social conditions which must exist in a state outside the pale of love, and these have helped on the injury. And all this unnatural course has been of old, and still it is—bequeathing from age to age a residuum of evil. In nearly all the ills which are found in the body of man we have the penalty

of his age-long transgression of the law of love; and what of ill in his body has not resulted from his own actual transgression, has yet resulted from that transgression through the frame of nature as adapted to a sinning creature, in the way we have just seen.

It is sufficient to indicate that the penalty will also appear in the mind, and that in its subjection to error and prejudice, and in the development of its very powers, the mind of man is very different from what it would have been had the heart been all along engaged in the high service of love.

This is also true of human society. The evils which infest it—which torture it—which madden it—which drink away its life and joy, are all due to that state of the universal heart which is in continual opposition to the law of love.

But these thoughts are only ascending steps to the last and greatest. The moral and spiritual nature of man is that on which the penalty first falls, in which the penalty is most destructive, and through which only the penalty descends on all the rest.

What has been the penalty in man's spiritual being? In what respects does man as he now exists differ from man as he would have been within the Eden of love? That he must be different we know, for different and opposing courses of action cannot produce the same result. What is the penalty?

The Scriptures have an answer. They say, Death! Does that mean the death of the body? We have just seen that the death of the body is included. But it is in the New Testament we find the term explained in its widest meaning. Man is dead to God—is dead in trespasses and sins. Man is dead to the great kingdom of love. By each selfish action he dies to it, and so he is dead to it. By each selfish action he separates himself from it, and so he is separate. His

heart, a branch of the great tree of love, breaks away from the tree; and thenceforth it is without the life of the tree, and is dead to it. The strong life still beats in the tree, but in him it beats no more.

This state of spiritual death we behold everywhere around us, the greatest reality of the world. Where is the nation or people which with its whole heart is paying the service of its whole being to love? Where is the nation that is even confessedly and honestly striving to do it? Separate hearts may be found which have risen as high as this effort, but no national morality has yet approached in view of it. Taken in the mass, the men around us are not only without the effort—they are without a wish for the effort—lower still, they are without a thought of the effort. They have not felt their failure of the kingdom of love, for the kingdom of love is the farthest from them of all the *terræ incognitæ*. As little as the sunless Laplander, crossing his frozen stretches, has dreamt of tropical climes, where the torrid summer heaps plain and wood with glowing blooms, and the bird of paradise sails on the warm air overhead—as little have men dreamt that there is, even ideally, a kingdom of love. To that kingdom they are dead.

And the man who has seen that kingdom—seen it as a patch of lovely shore lying half-revealed in mist, let him strive to steer to it and to reach it. Let him who has seen a faint ideal of love strive to realise it. Let him change himself into a being whose every thought and wish shall henceforth be in obedience to the higher law. He cannot. He could as easily put himself on another planet. If there is anything the experience of man has declared impossible, it is this. Even low forms of the ideal are unattainable. To make himself better in some way the wretched Buddhist has let his body wither under burning suns,

in hunger and thirst and nakedness. To make himself better the conscience-stricken Crusader has toiled over seas and continents through countless and nameless privations. To make himself better the sallow monk has lashed his flesh, and fed himself on clay, and buried himself in a life-long dungeon. And when the failure of these honest madnesses is felt, men turn round again upon their hearts in despair. Even when by the Spirit of God the mind is so changed that the state of unconscious death becomes a state of conscious death, there is still no power in man to undo what remains of penalty. He is not a loving being, and he cannot make himself a loving being. Who, he asks, shall deliver me from this body of death?

Let me then claim your attention for this unquestionable truth, that the failure of man to live in obedience to the one highest law of all moral being, results in, as concerns that law itself and the life that flows from it, a state of death. There has been a great transgression of law, and there is a great penalty.

2. *Our second thought is* LOVE. By love we have deliverance from this penalty.

It is said by many: There is no such thing possible as deliverance from penalty. If we sin, we must suffer the natural results. The only way to avoid the suffering is to avoid the sin that brings it. This is more true than most of us dream.

It is absolutely true for this life of those penalties of sin which existed prospectively, and before the actual occurrence of sin, and which have been woven into the very tissue of the physical world. From these we can expect no deliverance but in separation from the world. And the " redemption of the body " is one of the glorious hopes with which the Gospel has inspired us. Death bears us from the sphere where

these penalties are in operation. We exchange the corruptible body for the incorruptible, this sick and faded world for the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In a less absolute sense it is true of those penalties for transgression of law which we find in the bodies of men, and in the minds of men, and in human society. These cannot be suspended or destroyed. On to the bitter end they must flow. No forgiveness of sins can be supposed for a moment to break the sceptre of inexorable Law. These evils have been caused by a failure in that higher sphere, the moral, to which all the other spheres are subject; and while the evil continues there the penalties will continue to descend upon the lower spheres, as the lava rushes down upon the lands which lie around the volcano. But it is quite conceivable that if in that higher sphere the evil should cease—if the moral nature should be changed over to the service of love, then not only would the evil influences cease to descend, but a new set of influences would become new causes of a new series of results. The penalties of former transgression would exhaust themselves. Gradually the burnt-out volcano might clothe his shaggy sides with bloom, and over the withered plains below the industry of the husbandman might extend a new fertility.

With those, then, who object to the Atonement that there can be no such thing as deliverance from penalty, we so far agree. But here we stop. For if there can be no such thing as deliverance from penalty then there can be no such thing as deliverance from the spiritual death, which is the first and highest of all the penalties.

And, indeed, on the mere level of natural sequence, there can be no deliverance. The state of man, con-

sidering man only in himself, is a result of sin, and a result far down in a series of long-descending results. Can he who has been swept so far down a mountain torrent, now turn himself about, and swim up against the headlong waters? In most cases he does not wish to do it, or think of doing it; and even when he wishes to do it, his effort is vain. Where is the man who has lifted himself into love?

The need of his condition is a new *life* in him which shall start fresh sequences in his nature.

A man is perishing from loss of blood. The physician sees the case is hopeless. Already the pulse is dropping away towards the endless quiet. The penalty is death, and taken in himself there is no deliverance. But now the doctor brings the dying man's brother to the bedside, and opens a vein in his arm. He pumps the strong man's blood into the empty veins. The failing heart already feels the new life. The pulse quickens. He is saved.

On the level where penalty is incurred, or any other lower level, there is never deliverance from penalty. If deliverance comes, it must come from a new source of power acting higher up, and starting new sequences which shall annul the penalty without abrogating the laws by which the penalty is administered. There must be new *life.*

Let us distinctly see, then, what is meant by deliverance from the penalty of sin. The deliverance is not wrought by any interruption of the sequence of cause and effect—by any disturbance of the order of law. The law knows no mercy, and for ever it holds on its inexorable way. This is the truth signified by the term, the Justice of God. And when the preacher speaks of the sword of justice as naked and glittering, and when he declares that it must be sheathed in the breast of a victim before there can

be salvation from sin, he only maintains the eternal permanence of law—he only affirms the truth that where there is transgression of law there must be the fitting penalty, and that no power in earth or heaven can prevent the results which have been incurred.

The deliverance must come from a point above human nature and outside it. God pours his own life into the spirit of man, and makes it alive. This is the great free gift, and by this gift of life into the spiritual nature, the death in that nature, which was the penalty of sin, is cancelled. And that this divine life may be gradual, both in its entrance and in its results, makes no difference in the fact. Then this divine life in man, like any other life, follows its own instinct of renovation. The man's spirit becomes new, and from this centre of all-being the renovating influences radiate to all around. His mind shares the change. His body, as far as his body can in this way be reached, shares the change. Society feels the change. And if we venture to think of the divine life as existing in all the race, and the state of sin in man's spiritual nature as exchanged for a state of complete obedience to the law of love, then would human society have reached its utmost perfection. Then also that necessity which has adapted the creation to a sinful being should have past away, and the creation itself should be ready to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." That there will be an end of the present constitution of the world, Scripture and science both declare. And Scripture sustains the expectation of science that the old order shall give place to a new. And thus the spirit of God's life should work a great Atonement and restitution through all the course of nature, and this side by

side with the unbroken and inflexible operation of majestic law.

Let us now raise our eyes to the great Fountain-head of all this change.

God is love. And when it is declared that God is love, it is meant that we rise to the truest idea of God when we interpret Him through human love. Whatever more He may be, He is at least as much.

Now a good man cannot live in a house or a city with a number of persons who are sinning and suffering, and remain quite unaffected by what he sees. And his feeling in relation to the sin and suffering will be in proportion to his goodness. And also in proportion to his goodness will be his effort to remove their sin and to assuage their sorrow. It is certain that a good man cannot meet a proper occasion for helping another, and pass it by. God is at least all this. Our truest idea of God's feeling towards sin is that He hates it, and that He is pained by it. Our truest idea of God's feeling towards suffering is that He suffers with it. And our truest idea of God's activity in relation to sin and suffering is this, that if it be in his power to remove sin, by the very necessity of his nature He must remove it; and if it be in his power to help those who need help, by the same necessity He must help them.

If there be a God, He is the life of the universe, and all the life of the universe flows from Him. If there be a God, the Apostle declared aright of Him when he said, " In Him we live and move and have our being."

Look at your hand. It has no life in itself, except as in union with your body. There is a spirit of life in your body which animates your hand. Your hand is only a piece of bone and flesh. It cannot live alone. If it be cut off, the law of decay, which

has been held in check by the spirit of life, swoops down upon its unresisting prey. And if the flesh of your hand be torn, there is in the hand itself no power to restore the damage. But the moment the damage is inflicted the spirit of life in you takes upon itself the restoration, and this restoration is effected by the spirit of life in you at its own cost and sacrifice. There is in you a certain utmost possibility of vitality, which can neither be increased nor diminished; and of this certain amount of possible vitality a certain amount of actual vitality is spent in restoring the wound. Considered in the flesh only, there had been a transgression, the penalty followed, and from the penalty there could be no deliverance. But the spirit came in, and without any rupture of the connection between sin and penalty, without any suspension or alteration of the natural laws which otherwise would have operated, it lifts off the penalty to itself, and at its own expense and sacrifice.

God is in the universe like the spirit of life in the body. And since the loving God knew beforehand the weakness of man, and saw beforehand that in the beginning of his existence he would live below the highest moral law, and in constant transgression of it, He would not have brought him into being unless He intended himself to bear for man his sins and sorrows, and unless He knew He could bear them. And now in all the affliction of his creatures He is afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saves them. He is the living Sin-bearer; He is the living Sorrow-bearer. Far away above all the laws which minister penalty is that royalest law of love, throned eternally in the heart of God. If the lesser laws are certain and unalterable, much more is that greatest law certain and unalterable. It *must* restore damage. It *must* extend blessedness. If anywhere in any star there

be an eye blind with tears, those tears it must kiss away. If anywhere there be a heart lying captive in the black prison of its own selfishness, against those prison bars it must beat, and around those prison doors it must hover—as the sad mother, with only a spark of its own divine passion in her heart, hovers about the walls that hold her erring son. While God lives He must yearn with a deathless yearning over every creature He has made, and the need of each creature—the pain, the darkness, the burden, and the woe—these define the strength of that law of love which outside and around all the complex machinery of existence yearns on to bless and save him. Love is the law of laws, and while the heart of God beats there can be no suspension or abrogation of the law by which every creature is lived for, is suffered for, is died for;—of that great "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus which makes us free from the law of sin and death."

3. *Our last thought is* ATONEMENT. If God is a living loving spirit pervading all things, and willing to restore every damage occasioned by the transgression of law, why is not all damage restored immediately on each transgression?—why do we behold around us a condition where the damage has not been restored, and has become chronic?

In the first place we must remember that God's Atonement in the universe is communicated through the spirit of man. On mind and matter He does not in this way immediately act. And this for a most important reason. The penalties have arisen, as we have seen, because of the transgression of law in the spiritual sphere. And the transgression in the spiritual sphere has arisen because man, as yet only in the infancy of his being, has not reached obedience to the law of love. If then we conceive of the Spirit

of God as everywhere restoring the evils of sin in the first moment of their existence, we should still have the loveless state in man which produced them, and which would again produce them, and which would go on for ever to produce them. And thus it seems of little use to deal with the evils in the lower sphere while the root of all these evils in the higher sphere yet remains untouched.

And, moreover, these very evils in the mind, in the body, in society, and in nature are a necessary means for reaching the spirit of man with Atonement. How is the man who is living away from the obedience of love first warned of his true condition, if not by the break-down and failure of his life? A thousand voices are crying out around him, There is something wrong! Had all his life succeeded, or had an immediate compensation followed every breach of law, he had never learnt the great lesson which most of all he had need to learn. For then God had made it possible for his creature to live without Him. And even when man has entered the precincts of the life in love, the discipline which advances him in that life is still furnished by the ruins of the life for self—by the miseries consequent on the broken law which yet cling to his flesh like sores, or like sharp flint-stones strewing all his earthly pathway tear the naked feet which must tread them.

We must also remember that the central thought of the Atonement is to unite man with God in love. And man is brought to love God by seeing how God loves him. "We love Him because He first loved us." But in order that man may see the love of God, it is necessary that the love of God become visible. And love can become visible only in sacrifice. Sacrifice is the manifestation of love. But if there be no disorder to repair and no suffering to endure, there can

be no room for sacrifice. Wherefore a suffering to be endured, and a disorder to be repaired are necessary for the manifestation of love, and so for the salvation of man.

There is yet another reason against the immediate restoration of the damage occasioned in the universe by sin. God, we have said, is the great living, all-pervading Spirit who takes upon himself the burden of his creatures. But He can take upon himself the creature's burden only when the creature knows Him as the Burden-bearer, and consciously resigns to Him the burden. Man's knowledge that God is ever present to repair the damage of sin, is a condition without which the damage of sin cannot be repaired. For in the great work of Atonement God does not labour in the sphere of dead matter, but in the sphere of living spirit. The sphere where Atonement begins is the very sphere which has been placed under the vicegerency of man. It is that kingdom of man's own spirit of which man himself holds the sceptre. And the rights of that sceptre deputed to man are so sacred that not God himself invades them. All changes in the spirit of man are only accomplished through the will of man. And the will of man is dependent on his knowledge. Therefore it is that God the great living, healing, restoring Spirit, cannot enter the spirit of man to restore him, till man knows that He is ready to enter, and trusts Him that He will enter. Man must know and believe in the love that God has toward him.

How is he to know this?

Tell him. Describe to him the operation in the universe of the great invisible God. Open to him the great philosophy at which we have glanced. As well attempt to expound Kepler and Newton to a savage! In rare instances you would fall in with a

mind that could receive your abstract teaching. But to the rest you would utter enigmas. And even those who might understand your Gospel, would not *feel* it. It would be a philosophy, and not a Gospel. What you want is a Gospel, and not a philosophy. You want a message with so much of heart in it as shall strike home to the universal heart. You want a message that shall do for wise men and for simple, for kings and for peasants, for old men and for little children. You want such a catholic Gospel as can be spoken in all languages to all peoples at all times under all conditions. You must indeed present the wonderful philosophy that the atoning God is afflicted in all our afflictions, and that the Angel of his presence is saving us; but you must present the philosophy in such a form that it shall no longer be a philosophy, but every semblance of philosophy shall have past away from it. You want a Gospel that shall give the high truth, and shall yet be simple for all minds, and warm for all hearts, and strong for all needs. You want the great tender philosophy condensed into a tender picture—a picture ready for hanging-up before all eyes, and needing nothing to interpret it but the beat of the universal human heart. This is the Gospel you want—where will you find it?

It is found. You have it in your hand. Jesus Christ is the manifestation to the world of the great mystery—the eternal secret.

There is born into the world a wonderful babe. The babe becomes a wonderful child. The child becomes a wonderful man. Jesus Christ passes a few years in humble obscurity, and then He emerges into a certain fame. But He is chiefly known by the opposition He provokes and the hatred that is levelled against Him. These close on Him, like a narrowing ring of iron, and torture and slay Him. He rises

from the dead, and passes into the heavens. But chosen messengers go out in the strength of a new power to tell the truth till then undreamed. The crucified man was the Son of God. The weight of suffering He bore was on behalf of his murderers. His own self bare the sins of men in his own body on the tree. And this sacrifice He offered to save them of his own free will. And the messengers added the call: Believe on Him! Believe that He is become sin for you that you might become the righteousness of God in Him! Believe, and you will receive remission of sins!

Is it possible to conceive of any method by which the eternal truth could better be brought home to the hearts of men? The eyes which would for ever have been unable to apprehend the great sacrifice in the Divine nature, can easily apprehend the sacrifice which was offered in the flesh of Jesus Christ. The truth we want for salvation is this—*that God bears our sins for us in order that we may not bear them.* And the mind which believes that God in Christ has done it, has the truth.

But we have not said all when we have said that Jesus Christ is a presentation in human limits which we can apprehend, of a truth which up in the Divine immensities we could not apprehend. He is more than this. For the great need is to get the truth of Divine Sacrifice for sin home to the *hearts* of men so that they shall be warmed into a new life by the love that is in it. And here is shown the wisdom of God in this human Gospel. For what has ever surpassed the story of the cross in tragic picturesqueness and profoundest pathos of devotion to the good of others! The cross not only tells us that God is bearing our sins for us, but we *see* Him calmly surrender himself to buffetings and shame and death,

with circumstances of a mingled heroism and tenderness which have touched men's deepest hearts in all ages, and which shall continue in all ages to touch them. They admire Him—they adore Him—they praise Him—they thank Him—but all this is not enough. They want something more. They break over the golden railing with which his Divinity would seem to fence Him round from the familiarity of creatures—break over in a passion of enthusiastic feeling that will not be satisfied till they have grasped the hem of his garment and covered his sacred feet with the burning kisses of a new and self-devoting love. They love Him. And thus are they won to that great love the want of which made all their transgression and all their misery. That sacrifice of Himself which redeems them from the penalty of transgression, redeems them also from the transgression itself, by raising them into the service of the highest law of love.

And thus the Cross of Christ is the means of our salvation. The Cross of Christ—the very Cross of Christ, and not a mere moral influence associated with a death of heroic self-surrender. The Blood of Christ shed upon the Cross is that Blood of the Lamb in which the kindreds and nations and peoples and tongues have washed their robes and made them white. For the Blood of Christ represents the physical suffering and death of Christ produced by human sin. The physical suffering and death of Christ are but an infinitesimal portion of the Divine Sacrifice for sin, but they are that portion which all men and women and children can SEE. Even when in the flesh the mental and spiritual sacrifice of our Saviour were a something surpassingly more than the physical. But these were veiled within the unsearchable depths of his Divine personality, and none

can know them, or even guess of them. And outside and above the incarnate God, there is that infinite and perpetual sacrifice for sin in the Deity which is even farther and higher beyond all scope and reach of our knowledge. But these all are pictured in that one act of the Divine Sacrifice, in that bearing of our sins in his own body on the tree. In that one vivid point the sacrifice of God is concentrated in order to bring it to the apprehension of man. In the few strokes of that tremendous picture we receive the truth of the universe. And yet so fully and absolutely is the death of Christ the sacrifice of God for our sin, that we need no more. We may understand the philosophy of the Cross, or we may not understand it—alike we have the truth and the salvation it brings. For by the one offering He has perfected for ever them who are sanctified—by the one offering He has revealed Divine Sacrifice, and, by bringing it to the knowledge of men, has made it effective to save them.

And yet the connection of God with our sins becomes strange and unreal, unless, having seen the Cross, we go on to see also the infinite truth which by the Cross is manifested. We have to tell you that Jesus Christ bore your sins in his own body on the tree. But we have also to tell you that every sin you commit makes suffering in the heart of God; and we have to tell you that every sin you commit produces a disorder which nothing but the actual gift and sacrifice of God's spirit of life can restore. We have to tell you that the work of Jesus Christ, God manifested in the flesh, was finished at Jerusalem. But we have also to tell you that while sin continues God has an everlasting connection with it, and that to Him it is a connection of ceaseless suffering,

and that only through his *long-suffering* are we saved.

I know there have been representations of the atoning death of Christ which have been calculated to shock and repel the minds of intelligent and cultured persons. For these I do not contend. But I do contend that wherever the shedding of Jesus' Blood on Calvary for the sin of man is abandoned, the preacher has abandoned that adaptation of an infinite philosophy to a finite mind which only the wisdom of God could have invented. And wherever this is done the result is certain. The great truth of Divine Sacrifice for them, which men want most of all, is lifted to a range above their apprehension. And what remains of Divine truth is shot at the human heart like an arrow without a head. For the wisdom of man has carefully picked off the arrow that irresistible head which God in his wisdom lived and died to make and fit on.

Here the great subject passes into the experience of men, and he who would study it farther must study it as a question of experience. To a certain point the physician may study a system of treatment in theory, but to complete his view he must study it experimentally. Is it true that the Atonement of Jesus Christ does produce in men the results I describe? Do those who believe in Him find the assurance in themselves that the penalty of sin is remitted? Do those who believe in Him find the beginnings, however small and gradual, of that new life in love which in its full development is to deliver them from transgression? It would be easy to gather many thousands of the most intellectual and educated persons who would declare it. Millions of voices would affirm it in all languages and from all lands. Could the

witness of these be doubted on any other subject whatsoever? Why is it rejected on this? It is surely that one evidence of the truth of the Atonement which were it wanting would be demanded first by the very men who now refuse it.

Brethren, let us love the Cross of Christ! We are in a day when it has been plucked up by many, and thrown at the roadside to perish as a thing of scorn. But I have striven this morning to show you that the pretended intellectualism which rejects the Cross, in the full meaning of the sacrifice and substitution of Jesus Christ, is only a shallow intellectualism after all. Deeper and wider—surpassingly deeper and wider is this philosophy of the Atonement which embraces the doctrines of the Cross, and shows their harmony and even identity with the greatest principles of being. Let us love the Cross! Let us exult in the Cross! Let us be loyal to the Cross! To all the measure of our poor strength let us labour to spread the Gospel of the Cross. In our own minds may the Cross be a light—in our own hearts a strength and a purity. By it may we have remission of sins, and that witness of the Spirit within us that we are the children of God. And when we think of the future of our world, may we see nothing brighter or better for it, as the outcome of all these labouring ages, than that the Cross of Jesus being lifted up, all men may be drawn to it. And beyond the world—beyond this wild dream of life over which the image of the Cross has beamed with hope and inspiration,—beyond that valley of death adown whose darkness the pale multitudes go craving as God's greatest kindness that He would "hold the Cross before their dying eyes"—beyond all these, may we mingle in that throng to whom the Cross was dear, who "have

washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." O let us love the Cross, and labour for it! Chanting always with a depth of meaning the Unitarian poet never knew,—

> "In the Cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the lights of sacred story
> Gather round its head sublime."

THE CHRISTIAN AIM FOR THE WORLD

"God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN iii. 16.

THE aim of God's love for the world is that men may have everlasting life. And when we share the nature of God, we desire for our fellows what God desires. But we may differ in opinion among ourselves as to how this desire should lead us to work. And thus I propose to ask and to answer the question: *What are we as Christians to do with the world in order that men may have everlasting life?*

Two answers are commonly given.

It is said: You as a Christian are done with the world. God has broken for you its spells, and dissolved its enchantment. To all that is around you you are henceforth crucified. You are a pilgrim flying through a wilderness to the city of your choice. It is a wicked world, and it has slain your Saviour—be deaf to its sweetest voices, and blind to its loveliest scenes. In nowise touch what the fires of destruction are hastening to wrap in their red glare. Your only business with the world is to escape from it to Heaven.

On another hand it is said: Your aim as a Christian is to recreate that Paradise garden which the breath of sin destroyed. God's design for man in this world is a life of undimmed felicity. And only when everything that breaks our peace and spoils our happiness has been driven away—only when in the restored

Eden the heart of man finds everything it seeks, will God's design for him be fulfilled.

Between these two replies I step with another. But let us advance to it through some preparatory thoughts.

Notice the effect of the present condition of the world on man's spiritual being.

The child with its exquisitely impressible nature comes forth to be imprest by the things around. Everything it sees, everything it hears, leaves a stamp on mind and heart. But at this supreme period of influence, what is the character of the influence produced? Let us see. The child beholds rich men dwelling in fine houses, and rolling in fine carriages, and enjoying a continual tribute of honour and praise. It sees the poor degraded by common consent for the reason they are poor, fenced out from the fair enclosures of fashionable society, and contemned, if not absolutely despised. It sees that eager quest of money which declares that in the minds of men it is regarded as the chief good. It sees men aiming at happiness as the end of life. Perchance at its own hearth it hears national pride asserted, and the bloody war which sustains that pride defended with enthusiasm. And all the custom and language of the world declare that to be noble and wealthy and successful is more than to be humble and gentle and true. And what is this, but a continual and overpowering denial before that young spirit of the temper and teaching of Christ—a denial which derives its tremendous strength from the fact, that while the truth from Heaven can only reach the heart through a spiritual sense yet scarcely developed, the falsehood can reach the heart by all those wide and easy gates which stand most open in childhood, and which admit the evil and the good together

unchallenged. Is it too much to affirm that the child grows up in an atmosphere of practical atheism and unrebuked sin?

Arrived at manhood, this atmosphere is denser. It rolls around us like a bewildering fog; it disguises our path; it blots out our heaven. Does the man now rank with the rich? He inherits their traditions, he shares their prejudices, he follows in their ways. It is not an easy thing—it is an immensely hard thing to separate yourself from the herd with which you move. And it is so ready and natural to think that the thing which has been done for centuries, and which is still being done by the larger number of respectable persons, is the thing that ought to be done, and the thing that always shall be done. And when the young man born to wealth and position finds himself in the midst of that worldliness which has always been respectable, which has always been supported by the bravest of men and the fairest of women, which decks itself with proud names and splendid hatchments, which gathers among its worshippers the poet and the painter and the sculptor, and which has an easy command of whatever on earth may be commanded—he is little likely to call in question what so many unite to honour; little likely to doubt of its allegiance to the Gospel of Christ, when he finds it existing side by side with that Gospel, covering it with tender caresses, and spreading over it the shadow of protection.

Or is he who has touched his manhood among the poor and unknown? In this case his opportunities for culture and education have been comparatively few. He has been compelled in early years to exchange the school for the workshop. And since then he has toiled with long hours that left but little time for attention to the concerns of his inner nature. That

he has a mind he perhaps believes; that he has an immortal spirit, in too many cases he scarcely knows. One thing he does know—that the great world above him, and in whose service he is spending his life, cares but little for him. Religious it may be, but its religion does not reach so low as him. His whole experience of the world—that world which should have been to him as a great warm mother's bosom, nursing him into immortality—has been the service of a heartless taskmaster. It will take from him the sap of his manhood, and then in its festal procession, with the sparkle of its lamps and the strains of its music, wind gaily past where he lies in the ditch to die.

It arises from all this (rather from that of which all I have said but only hints—that large freedom of the world from the tempers and customs of the Gospel of Christ) that the Gospel of Christ is yet unknown to the mass of men. They have read of it, they have heard of it, but they have not yet known it. Many an artisan in London who daily brushes against its ministers in the street, is as ignorant of its first principles as the Hindoo or the Boodhist. For its first and greatest principles are love and self-forgetfulness, and these are not the characteristics of society. Even many a regular church-goer has no idea of the central meaning of the Gospel. For he interprets the Gospel by what he sees in the Church, and pride and selfishness are conspicuous there.

The Apostle Paul spoke of those "living epistles" which appear in the lives of faithful men. And he had more trust in the power of a "living epistle," with its eyes that should beam love, and its hands that should work love, than in the most eloquent of written epistles. And we to-day hanging fondly and adoringly over all the epistles which Paul has left to

us, yet rise to gaze backward toward Paul himself, the great "living epistle," with his life-long devotion to his Master, and we draw from that living epistle an inspiration no words could ever lend us. For a man is always more than a word. The Holy Ghost can speak to us through words, but with a thousandfold power the Holy Ghost can speak to us through a man. And it is always the eloquence through the man that lights up and explains the eloquence in the word.

Now the Gospel has hitherto contended with this difficulty, that while its truths have been spread on paper, and occasionally interpreted by some grand life, the larger number of "living epistles" under the eyes of man have been epistles of the evil and not the good. For it is in the nature of man to learn chiefly from what he sees. And the customs and habits of the world have all been of the evil. And the confusing and damaging influence of these customs and habits has been increased and intensified by the fact that a nominal Christianity has adopted them and stamped on them the signature of its approval. So-called Christian men have been content at the same moment to live luxuriously or heap up useless wealth and to hold the belief that the world is perishing for lack of knowing that Gospel which can only be made known by the aid of money. So-called Christian men have been content at the same moment to indulge in jealousy and unforgivingness and revenge, both socially and nationally, and to read with apparent approval the words of Christ which cover all these with unsparing condemnation. So-called Christian men have been content at the same moment to struggle for eminence and notoriety and to hold in their hands the pattern life of Him, their Master, who came not to be ministered unto

but to minister, who humbled himself, and made himself of no account. And with the living epistles and the written epistles thus stultifying each other, what is the world to do? which believe and which discredit? You answer: Let the world believe the written word at all costs. You are right, but *will* the world do it? All experience answers: No. All experience affirms the truth I have stated, that men are most influenced by what they see, and that in case of disagreement between what they see of Christian life and what they read of Christian doctrine and morality, they are usually inclined to interpret the doctrine by the life. And the result is that Christian doctrine and morality have in a large degree come down from their lofty standing-place to occupy such a platform as the custom and usage of the world can supply. It is supposed that when the Gospel says: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself, it only means, at least it only means for this world, what the bulk of so-called Christians are actually doing from day to day; and so the grand ideal is lost to the minds of men, and the minds of men, deprived of the grand ideal, struggle on in stupid contentedness with a state of things which they are too ignorant to deplore or amend—even as the dweller in a level land, who has never seen the majesty of great mountains thronging the sky with their summits, makes his idea of a mountain from the little hill that stands behind his native town.

To all this dwarfing and hindering effect of the present condition of the world on man's spiritual nature, we may add another influence which springs from what may be called the hereditary transmission of evil tendencies. That physical tendencies can be transmitted from generation to generation we know.

The power for scent or speed can be slowly developed in a breed of dogs. The horse which wins the cup is no fresh upstart from some obscure farmhouse. He has a line of illustrious ancestors behind him, and he has still further developed the points which made them famous. That physical characteristics are transmitted by men, the student of the race can easily learn by comparing the child of gentle parents with the child of an ignorant and besotted ancestry, lying about the kennels of a filthy by-street. And a little more study will show that mental characteristics may be transmitted from parent to child. And finally he will come to the fact that in the very capacities of our moral nature we are more or less dependent on those who went before us. And thus, as branches from an evil stock, as those who come into existence with a certain bent and leaning toward evil, which, in theological terms, we have been accustomed to call "original sin," we have mournfully to confess that the condition of things that meets us in the world is unwholesome for the development of our spiritual nature towards God.

The natural result of all this we see around us. The text asserts that the design of God is that men may have everlasting life. And our Christian philosophy makes us understand that for the realisation of this design the world was created at first, and is continually sustained. But is this design actually realised? As a matter of fact we know that enormously the greater number of human souls leave this world without having reached that everlasting life which consists in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. It is impossible to question that this is true concerning three-fourths of the race to which the Gospel is yet unknown; and it is scarcely more possible to question that it is true

of the great majority of those to whose ears, but to their ears only, the Gospel has come. Of the future condition of those myriads of myriads of human souls we have nothing here to say. We have only to say that, as an authentic fact, they leave this world without having realised that everlasting life which is their destiny in the love of God. And we have to add our conviction that a cause which largely helps on to this terrible result is that condition of things in this evil world which prevents the Gospel of Jesus Christ from reaching the hearts of men with that native simplicity and convincing power which are always accompanied by the victorious influences of the Holy Spirit.

And now let us repeat the question with which we began. What are we as Christians to do with the world in order that men may have everlasting life? Our reply is: We have to improve its conditions, we have to remove what is a hindrance to the growth of the spiritual life, and we have to supply what would be helpful. In a word, the highest idea of Christianity for the present world is to make it a nursery wherein shall be produced men and women of God. And just in proportion as the world improves shall the number of those who pass each year from earth to heaven increase.

That the world has improved, and that the world is improving can scarcely be doubted by any but the mad or the blind. The lands in which the Gospel holds sway are more gloriously swayed by the Gospel from year to year. Look at the past of our own country, and think with what strides society has advanced within this century under the stimulating influences of Christianity. Think of the evil customs and habits of thought which have either past away or partially past away—the duelling, the

craving for martial glory, the disregard of human life, the unblushing drunkenness and profligacy. And think, on the other hand, how all these years another set of customs and habits of thought, the direct outgrowth of the Gospel of Christ, have been steadily raised and established. Comparatively with the numbers of the population, the number of men and women who believe in Jesus Christ and love Him is immensely greater. For every pulpit where He was preached as a present Saviour in the days of our great-grandfathers a hundred pulpits declare Him now. For every man or woman then engaged in charitable effort a hundred are busy now. And all this betokens a change in the whole atmosphere of society, of which no true conception could be formed, unless it were possible to step, by way of experiment, from our own days of light and privilege into those times of comparative twilight.

How are the young affected in relation to this change? It seems to us unquestionable that the child born amid our English society in this century has very many more chances of passing from earth to heaven than the child born last century had. It is more likely to have truly Christian parents, more likely to receive a religious education, more likely to have its tender mind haunted with that sweetest of all creations, the gentle and child-loving Saviour. And that which affects the child affects the man. It is surely as much harder to be ignorant of the Gospel, to be given over to a life of thoughtlessness and worldliness, to be untouched by the higher sentiment of love abroad. And we fearlessly assert that the angels who reap the souls of the blessed have gathered such a harvest during the past fifty years as no other fifty years in the world's lifetime could show. The old grey rocks and gloomy gorges of the valley of the

shadow of death have grown more familiar with the name of Jesus from the lips of the pale passengers as they flitted through. If old Charon were a reality and not a fiction, we might suffer our imagination to paint him as surprised with the songs of triumph, which, in ever-increasing frequency, are chanted by those whom he ferries over the black water in his crazy yawl. For assuredly the promise is in course of actual fulfilment around us, that all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest.

And we love to dwell on what fulfilment of that promise has taken place, chiefly for the reason that it makes us bolder to anticipate the future. If the child born to-day has more chances of salvation than the child born a hundred years ago, shall not the child born a hundred years hence have chances many times more still? With a higher tone of life in the world, with a higher tone of life in the family, with a higher tone of life in the Church, what surpassingly greater spiritual influences shall reach the tender mind, and how easily and naturally might that young mind unfold into the kingdom of God. With the gradual improvement of the atmosphere in which our children grow up, we conceive of a gradually improving spiritual condition in them as a natural result. We can even conceive of a time when that change we call conversion shall no longer stand out sharply and prominently in the religious history of men. We see it now because men are nursed under a set of worldly influences, and when from this current they are snatched away by a set of heavenly influences, there is the sudden and striking change. But even at present we find that when children are reared in homes of piety they sometimes seem rather to grow up into the kingdom of God than to be transplanted into it after having grown up outside. And if the

holy influences were only more permanent and abiding, this might be the case almost universally, and the life of God might appear in each young heart, as the faculties developed which sustain it, like the soft and quiet stealing of a summer dawn.

Our aim then as Christians for the world is so to fit it up that it shall become a good nursery for the Paradise gardens. The gardens which depend for their flowers and trees on a barren and ill-managed nursery will at once feel the difference when a new manager, a man with skill and capital, undertakes the culture of the perishing ground, and improves all its conditions for growth. No longer are they served with a few lean and ragged plants; now they have flowers in abundance, flowers of richest culture and most perfect beauty. And that heaven which is dependent on earth must feel the result of each improvement here which brings the Gospel of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost into more effective operation on the heart of man.

And practically in this endeavour to improve the conditions of the world our chief aim must be to spread the Gospel. It has grown fashionable in these days to speak of the Gospel as a worn-out power—as a rank and injurious superstition which the culture and intelligence of the age is throwing aside. And that there is a state of mind and heart to which the Gospel presents this aspect, and with some amount of philosophical certainty, we are quite aware. But just as surely there is another state of mind and heart which acknowledges the Gospel as a revelation from God, with no less philosophical certainty, and with a distinct view besides of the standpoint which the objectors occupy. Tell us the Gospel is a worn-out power, while this very day it is moving the hearts of millions of men with the deepest

emotions of admiration and gratitude and love. Then the wind is a worn-out power, while still we see it leap down upon the sea and tread it into foam, or breathe over the lands and kiss them into summer. Then the dew is a worn-out power, while still it goes forth by night to refresh the face of universal nature. Let who will indulge this silly cackle; for us, we stand with an assurance not less brain-wide nor heart-deep than that of the Apostle Paul; for us, we avow as fearlessly and as confidently as ever he avowed, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth.

But while we preach the Gospel we are not indifferent to other means employed to improve the world. We see the men at work who teach us how we can better observe the laws of our bodies, and thus advance the physical condition of the race—and we bid them God-speed. We see the social reformer at work seeking to arouse his fellows from long inaction, and denoting with eloquent finger the evils which make havoc of society—and we bid him God-speed. We see the far-sighted statesman at work, striking down with one hand old and time-honoured abuses, and raising with the other hand freer and richer institutions—and we bid him God-speed. In all these men we see helpers who are pushing on the design and spirit of the Gospel. And we claim that the Gospel is the force from whence they derive their influence, and that if that fountain were abolished their multitudinous efforts would dry up as the bed of the mountain torrent dries when its supply has ceased. And so we go forth with every man who is helping the world in any way whatever to virtue and righteousness, convinced that every evil custom and institution that disappears is a bar and hindrance gone, and the world is by so much

readier to receive the Gospel of Christ—by so much readier to become the Kingdom of God.

The whole subject we have considered may leave us as individuals, in addition to its broader teaching, two practical applications.

First, of consolation. It explains to you and me much of our want of progress as Christians. We are living in a world unwholesome to the spiritual life. The flower in the sheltered garden is surrounded with influences which conspire together to make it perfect as a flower. But we in this world are like flowers planted on the bare edge of a wintry hill against which the east wind strikes with its breath of sleet. All that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world. The thoughts, the ways, the customs, the desires, the ambitions, and the institutions of the world, are largely moulded by the prince of evil. The air in which we move is pestiferous for the life of God—is a choke-damp for the candle of Grace. And from all this it follows that the strength we put forth enables us to do little more than hold our own. And if we would not be discouraged it is well we remember this.

When in Geneva I often watched some swans on the river in the middle of the town. The dark blue waters rushed past tumultuously from the lake, edged with the white of their own foam. But the force of the river did not bear away the swans; from week to week, and month to month, they sat on the water in the one place. But their whole life was spent in the effort not to be carried away.

And if the God we trust is able to keep that we have committed to Him even against the whole dark drift of this wild world, how gloriously may He advance the Christian life to a perfection unconceived of now, when that whole drift has been turned round

from sin to righteousness. And how sweetly easy we may find it to keep the commandments of God in that new heaven and new earth, where all that could hinder is gone, and where only what is helpful remains.

And, secondly, the subject reaches us with exhortation. If the atmosphere of the world is so loaded with malaria, let us breathe it as little as possible. There are many Christians who, instead of avoiding, seem to court the malaria. They seem resolved either to defy the unhealthy influences, or to brace themselves against their power. Wherever the worldling goes they can go; whatever the worldling does they can do. But this is madness! The prayer of our Master is: "Not that Thou wouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." But how shall that man be kept from the evil who insists on touching and tasting and handling it day by day? To hope for it is presumption. God will not keep him from the evil, but God will abandon him to it. He makes choice to drink the poisoned cup—God will give him over to be gnawed by its anguish.

My brother, do you love the world? Has the mighty sentiment in the heart of God been wakened in you? Have you yet said: My selfish interest and my selfish pleasure shall all go down before this? I shall love the world as Christ loved it, and I shall give myself as He gave himself that men may have eternal life. The deadly rot of avarice shall not eat away my heart. The God-nature in me shall not be drowned in fatal pleasures. On the day they bury me they shall close a few handfuls of dust in the coffin, but *me* they shall not bury. I shall live on with an immortality the tomb cannot decay—wide as the air—more lasting than the sun; I shall live on in hearts influenced for Truth and Righteousness, in a

wider spread of the Kingdom of God. This glorious future is for all of us if we will—this looking down after our poor deaths from the bright edges of heaven on an earth made gladder and sweeter by our lives; —this standing within the pearly gates to welcome shining souls, whose salvation we were instrumental to secure. Step to-day into the life of God! love the world, and give your dearest and best that men may have everlasting life!

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

Infidel Books.—The spirit of infidelity utters itself from time to time in certain books. And as each book appears there is a great enthusiasm and clapping of hands in sceptical circles. *Now* at last the day of truth has dawned? *Now* at last the long superstition of Christianity is huddled into its ignominious grave. It was so when Hume's book appeared. And our life has already been long enough to witness one or two such occasions. Meanwhile the Christianity that has been so safely buried, with a habit of resurrection quite indomitable, frees itself from its grave-clothes, comes forth again upon the world, and each age stands in need of a fresh sepulture.

The history of such books is like the history of a stone which becomes loosened from the side of the mountain overhanging a lonely lake. Down upon the lake it plunges with a splash that stirs the echoes, and breaks the face of the water into foam and wave. And the birds that build their nests upon the ledges of the mountain rise in startled crowds, and wheel with clamorous screaming to and fro. But in half an hour the echoes are all silent, and the waves have died in ripples on the strands, and the birds have quietly settled down upon their nests again.

And where is the stone which made all the trouble? Why, lying forgotten at the bottom of the lake!

Abide in Me!—What a trouble these branches are in! So much to see to in getting out their leaves! so much to see to in expanding their buds! If they would give their attention to abiding in the Root, everything would go on better. Then the Root would take care of all, and leaves and buds would soon come right.

Let your light shine!—You are looking for some great work to do, and neglecting the one great work which God

has given you. Attend first to your own heart. If you have light your light will shine. What would be the use of hanging out a hundred empty lamps! Keep your heart—let your light shine, and leave the rest to God. Fear not—He will use you. In the dark wintry night of this evil world there are souls perishing for lack of a taper-gleam across the blackness. Be a taper, and leave God to turn the wanderers' eyes to you.

The Pure see God.—I suppose the first inventor of the telescope made a small tube with a glass at either end. Then he found the stars nearer. Galileo improved on the first rude invention, and the stars became nearer still. And they went on improving till the great six-foot reflector of Lord Rosse's telescope seemed to bring the heavenly bodies next door to us.

" Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Your heart in the state of purity is an implement for seeing Heaven. And the more your heart is pure, the more will Heaven seem near to you. Only be faithful, and you will see " greater things " than you have yet seen.

Bigotry and Love.—Given a professing Christian without the grace of God, and you have a bigot.

It is the grace of God in the man which so enlarges him that he becomes unwieldy for the moulds of bigotry. Then he can belong to no Church exclusively; he is one in love with all Christians.

You have seen a balloon lying on the earth empty of gas. It is only a mass of silk; you can roll it together, and bring it into the house, and label it, and lay it past; and quiet enough it will lie, I warrant you. But when it is filled with gas, where is the house that will contain it? Then its home is in the heavens; loose the cords that bind it, and thither it will bound of its own nature.

So your professor, empty of grace, may be rolled together in orthodox folds, and carried in, and laid away in this or that ecclesiastical storehouse, while the man who is full of love is away over the clouds, ranging the open sky, and high above the highest church spire that ever thought itself in heaven.

Our need is Love.—How barren we all are! Why? Because the mighty element of love is wanting. We go on for years, and we confess it is all effort—all duty—all trouble. Try another method. Instead of fiddling about amongst duties and commandments, cry to God for his Spirit! I shall tell you how it will be with you if you do this in earnestness and faithfulness—sometime or other, either in this life or in the life to come, there will fall on you a glorious baptism of the Spirit—there will roll under you a mighty tide-wave of the love of God, that will bear you triumphantly out of all your difficulties. Then your life will be what you wish it to be.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

"Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."—Rom. xiv. 12.

Solemn and mysterious is our personality. In what it consists we cannot tell. But it is the foremost fact of consciousness. I am not you; you are not I.

To this sense of personality the Apostle appeals. It is the basis of all our moral being. For as each man is conscious of his personality, so also is he conscious of a relation between his personality and right and wrong. If he does right, he feels that *he* has done the right; if he does wrong, he feels that *he* has done the wrong. Here the sense of every healthy mind is absolutely perfect. And that man has past into a diseased and abnormal state who could think of implicating another mind in his own free act. In his normal state he knows the act is his—inalienably his.

This complete personality—this absolute separation of one man from all other men, in the highest and most elemental parts of his nature, is a revelation inscribed in ourselves of God's design for us. Each one is to be an independent person. Each one is to decide for himself how best he may live. Each one is to give account of himself unto God. And the existence which begins in absolute personality, and which is to end in absolute personality, can only be rightly maintained in absolute personality. It is because there seems a danger of our losing this truth in some of its practical applications, that I have chosen the subject now.

Our first thought is:—

I. *Each of us is personally responsible for his knowledge of the Truth of God.*

Perhaps there are many who do not see this—who have never recognised this great sphere of personality. They were taught certain things in childhood, and they have never questioned them; they were placed to move in certain ruts, and it would seem like a deliberate turning into error to swerve either to the right hand or to the left. No inducement could make them presume to doubt the infallibility of the guides of their youth. The first of all articles of faith is that every other article of faith they have received is true.

The foolishness of such a position is evident. For where the world of opinion is broken up into a thousand different fields, can any one man venture to hope that he has entered existence within the favoured enclosure of perfect truth? And even were he bold enough for this, can he be bold enough still to cling to the opinion when he finds that his neighbour to the right thinks the same thing of his field, and his neighbour to the left thinks the same thing of his field? And yet, surprising as it may appear, we are all more or less inclined to this silly confidence.

> "Such is the mind of each, and from our youth
> We each have held to a hair's breadth the truth."

The reason for this is not far to seek. The world has but recently emerged from that long darkness of ecclesiasticism in which the human mind was sedulously instructed not to do that one chief thing it was created to do—to think for itself. The world, do I say?—forgetful at the moment that the larger part of the world is still folded in that darkness. And even those who have broken free carry still with

them the habit learned there—the habit of receiving what comes with unquestioning simplicity.

That single word "free-thinker," as used in our religious speaking and writing, is a witness to the truth of what I say. For the word has been fastened on men who rejected Christianity, until a free-thinker has come to mean an infidel. But free-thinkers we should all be in the sense of using each for himself the reason God has given him. For the freest thing in the universe is mind, and it is only true to its godlike descent when it is free—free as the eagle soaring in his bright eternities of sky, with all thought of chain or wall left far below with the ground he spurns. And a fit image for the mind that has forfeited its freedom is that same bird locked in the iron bars, his crest broken, his wings drooping, and the glory withered from his eye.

No: the memory of home and childhood is sacred, and the sacredest thing on earth is the memory of a mother's religious teaching. And the memory of that church into which our feet were first led is sacred, where we were taught to bend with our fellow-men in worship, where first perchance we felt the touch of God. And the associations connected with these things are often so sweet, so pure, clinging around the events of our early life like a very bloom of roses, that it seems a sacrilege to touch them. But even that calm sanctuary of childish thought must be invaded. Our duty to God will not permit us to go on holding what we were taught in our childhood, simply because it was taught in our childhood—holding what was taught by a mother's lips, simply because it was taught by a mother's lips—holding what was taught in the church of our youth, simply because it was taught in the church of our youth. From father—mother—minister, we received what

each had to give, but not one of them could give us—no living man could give us—yea, no angel from heaven could give us that something more we need —that overmastering sense of Truth which can only be born of the free exercise of our own mind.

This is our duty respecting doctrine, and it is also our duty respecting the management of Christ's Church on earth. It is probable that there is one form of Church government best suited to the healthy development of the Christian religion, and it cannot be a matter of indifference which we adopt. And which shall we adopt? This is the question for each intelligent person. For on every hand there are men, bitter partisans of opposing sects, who have no better reason for being what they are than that they were born so, or that they became so through some taste or accident. Ask the stones on the road to account for their being there. They were thrown there!

I do not now argue for or against any religious or ecclesiastical opinions whatever. But I call upon you in the name of God to exercise the reason with which He has endowed you, and to be whatever you are because you see that it is right, and that it would be wrong for you to be anything else. I want to declare to you that concerning the doctrines we hold and the management of Christ's Church, "every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."

And there are important reasons for this active and conscientious investigation which I urge on you. It calls out the energies of your nature. It is the harder thing, and so it is the nobler. Easy it is to lie where we find ourselves—to be what we are told to be. But to refuse this—to stand erect and ask the *how* and the *why* of everything in supreme allegiance to God, and in the honest endeavour to do

his service—this is a something which taxes, while it develops, our highest manhood.

By the very grandeur of our nature has descended upon us this responsibility to know for ourselves the Truth of God. Were we only to repeat what our fathers believed, where were the advance of the world? Well has it been for the world that there have been men bold enough to think for themselves—men like the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther, cast out and gibbeted by the multitude around them, but honoured now with the homage of mankind.

For Truth is like food, which is nothing at all to us till it has been received, but which, when received and assimilated, becomes a part of our living selves. Truth must be identified with thought and feeling before it can be our own; it must not only have satisfied the mind; it must have stirred the pulses of the heart. Another man's truth can never be your truth. If it is really his, there was a time when he made it his, when it passed into him in intelligent conviction. But he has no power to transfer it ready-made to you—as he has no power to transfer to you the vital force he has derived from his food. And just as his truth is his, so must your truth be yours. There is no such thing as second-hand truth, or if there be a truth which seems to be derived from another, it is a pale, cold, shadowy reflection. It is only a moon floating over a world which it could not warm or fertilise. And all the men who have assisted to warm and fertilise the world have been men in whom Truth was like a strong sun of honest and original conviction. They had seen for themselves, and for themselves had tried and proved and felt. These were the men whom dungeons could not tame. These were the men whose bold conviction no death could stifle. They believed, and therefore did they speak.

There is laid before you a problem in mathematics. Against the problem stands the answer. You look on problem and answer spread silently on the page, and your mind yields a distant assent. You believe the answer is right on the authority of the book. But now you throw the thing on paper—you yourself run through the calculation—you reach the same result. But your belief has past from distant assent into honest conviction. Now, if need were, you could die for the truth of it. You *know* it.

Or you are a sick person, and you hear of a sovereign remedy which has reached many in just your state, and has lifted them to health, as if by enchantment. Again, you yield an assent which is only the ghost of a real faith. But you try the remedy—you experience its power—health, blessed health is yours once more. And now you are filled with enthusiastic conviction of the truth. You *know* it.

And it is this knowledge of the truth of God we need—a knowledge gained by our own personal contact with it—a contact of brain as well as heart.

It may be objected to all this: What reason have we to expect that we shall reach Truth better by our own effort than by the effort of the Good and the Wise who have gone before us? If a council of pious and learned men have decided that such and such things are to be believed, who am I that I should erect my judgment against their decision?

Very plausible is this objection. And between the standpoint I occupy of absolute personal responsibility, and this standpoint of absolute submission to authority, there is no resting-place. Either the one or the other of these standpoints must be yours. And what shall we answer to those who assert that it is our duty to accept the judgment of others? Simply what I have already said: That no man, and

no council of men, and no angel, and no council of angels, can give me that conviction of Truth which, according to the laws of mind, can only be created by seeing for myself that the thing is so. In the one case I rest on a dogma, in the other case I rest on what I myself have felt and handled of the word of life. The word of life is bread to my spiritual being; the dogma is only a husk. And thus even were it true that we have less chance of reaching the Truth by personal effort, it would still be true that to seek the Truth by personal effort is the best thing for us. Better to believe half the Truth with entire and enthusiastic faith, than to believe the whole truth, and only half believe it.

But I deny that the admission is correct. Let History speak! Were those ages in which the empire of councils over the heart of man was as complete as the empire of an invading sea over some land which it has buried in its depths—were those ages the time when Truth was most in contact with men, and when mind and heart bore the richest harvest for truth? A bold man will he be who affirms it—unless, indeed, he be one yet under the same sway, and who madly seeks to re-establish it on our world. But, no! The days of Papal supremacy over the mind of man are over. The snare is broken, and we are escaped. We have proved that councils of great men cannot bring us to God. We have proved that the humble exercise of our own powers in reliance on the Holy Ghost can do for us what they could not do. We are like those who have got free from some gloomy castle which stands behind us in its black woods; and we, out in the green world and the sunlight, sing and dance, exulting in our liberty; while the grim jailers come after us, and endeavour to woo us back to chain and dungeon, with soft promises of a rest—which

all our forefathers never found. And we behold with sadness the multitudes of young and thoughtless who are won by these glozing speeches, who resign their sweet liberty, and go back again into the captivity of Rome. But by God's help we shall not. Against that hateful and destructive tyranny we array all the force of opposition God has given us. We preach the glorious freedom of the human soul, and the dread responsibility that freedom brings. We cry—and if we could we would make the thunder tell it through the skies, till it should reverberate from Alp to Alp, and roll down the proclamation to the doors of that Vatican which has been and still is the source of our servitude—" Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God! "

I must not, however, be understood to depreciate the help which the Good and the Wise can lend us. That help it is simply impossible to overestimate. And that help it is our duty, in the exercise of our responsibility, to seek at every source which offers it. Each man who has gone farther than we have gone in thought and feeling is capable of becoming our teacher, and on that man we have to wait for what he may be able to impart. The distinction is here. We are not to receive Truth ready-made at the hand of any man. But we are carefully and prayerfully to test all the results of human goodness and wisdom, looking for the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, and under his guidance taking and assimilating into our own being what we need. What we thus seek and receive becomes in the highest sense a part of ourselves. And it is thus possible, on the one hand, to preserve that personality with which God has endowed us, and, on the other hand, to make the highest use of all that other personalities have wrought out. And by this process the advance of the world is accom-

plished. Men receive from all the generations behind them the accumulated results of human life, and gratefully taking their stand on what has been done, they stretch forth their hands for new achievement.

II. A second thought is this: *Each of us is personally responsible for his spiritual condition.*

A great work has to be done in you for salvation, and while God himself is the chief worker, you yourself are to be the chief worker together with God. In the realm of your own personality you are supreme. From others you may receive impulse and direction, but only so far as in the exercise of your own freedom you accept them. God has crowned you vicegerent of yourself.

The human will is like one of these old castles, a wreck of feudal times, perched aloft on the summit of an inaccessible crag. One path rises to the fortress, blocked at last by massy walls and ponderous gates, and the venturesome foe crowding up that narrow way was driven back in unresisting rout. On every other side only the foot of the wild goat could climb. Practically the stronghold was impregnable, and when at last yielded, it was yielded from within. For the human will none can sap or storm. It stands there, supreme and defiant in its very godlikeness. He who sets his will, for evil or for good, holds the keys of a castle around which all the world of force and hatred may rage in vain. And how often has this been proved right gloriously! Poor frail men have shown a strength within themselves which has overmatched shame and torture and death. This strength is in each one of us—this independent power which of itself is sufficient to announce us the sons of God. And because of it we are responsible for our spiritual state, since our spiritual state is what the will has made it.

Each man must attend to the culture of his own heart. You may hire others to cultivate your garden, you may hire others to cultivate your farm, but you cannot hire any man or any set of men to cultivate your heart. Into that inclosure no one but yourself and your God may intrude. Just as certainly as in the Jewish temple there was an inner chamber reserved for the High Priest only, there is in the midst of your nature a central solitude which no foot but your own can ever tread. In that solitude you are cut off from every other being. It is a world, and you are its one inhabitant. And of that world you are, under God, the master and the manager. And that world is much what you will make it. It may be a sterile wilderness overhung by the sun of passion—infested by every savage and loathsome beast that tenants the unrenewed heart; a land of drought, and terror, and loneliness, and desolation —of knees knocking together, and eyes wasted with weeping. Or it may be a lovely land, with its fertile fields and waving woods, with its luxuriance of many coloured flowers, with its spread of silvery lakes, with the roll of its rivers and the voice of its birds—such a land as men picture to themselves for paradise. All this you may do in yourself in the exercise of your tremendous power—you may fertilise yourself into an Eden, or waste and scorch yourself into a hell.

There is in you the faculty of Faith, and you yourself must exercise it. No friend can exercise it for you, no priest can exercise it for you, no church can exercise it for you—God cannot exercise it for you apart from yourself. That faculty is in you a Pisgah height from whence the Canaan may be viewed. But if you would view the Canaan, you must climb the Pisgah. That Moses climbed the

Pisgah will not do for you. That David and Isaiah and Paul and John went up to the royal summit and looked out on the far-lying lands in their light—all this will not do for you. That your own mother trod in their steps and reached their standpoint; that she gazed till her heart with looking on the glory was itself filled with glory; that her life was strong and patient and noble; that you waited by her death-bed, and witnessed her calm triumph as the end drew near;—not even this can take the place of your own trust in the everlasting Father. If all the world were trusting Him, and you yourself were not trusting Him, the trust of all the world would do nothing for you. In the midst of a world rejoicing in his smile, your own heart would be like a cavern in the midst of a summery land; from the warm air and the flowery world we descend its rocky path into dampness and coldness and blackness and death.

And the love to which the Gospel calls you must be the growth of your own being. You are commanded to love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself. And this command is not laid upon you as a stern and painful injunction; it comes to you as the revelation of what life God himself is living in his deep heaven, of what life his saints have sought in all ages at the joyful sacrifice of everything the world could offer, of that one only life in which the fulness and rest of your nature can be attained. You, not another, must be filled with love. And that you may be filled with love, you, not another, must yield yourself to the continual exercise in love. Though you cannot produce love in your heart—though that must be the work of God only, yet it is a work which God cannot perform without your concurrence. And the act of yielding your heart to Him that He may fill it with his love, is not to be the act of one

period in your life, but the continually-repeated act of every hour.

If a man would be a player on the violin, he must gain proficiency by practice—by his own laborious and persevering practice. It does not help him that others are masters of the instrument; they cannot make over their mastership to him. And if he be a rich man who would gladly barter half his wealth for that mastership, yet is he unable to purchase it—even at the hands of some starving musician eager enough to turn his knowledge into gold.

So is it with the man of mental culture, and so also is it with the man of spiritual culture. Each one is responsible for his own spiritual condition, for only he has the power to produce it.

You for yourself must repent of the evil you have done; you for yourself must turn from all unrighteousness; you for yourself must believe in the forgiving love of God; you for yourself must yield your body a living sacrifice to Christ; you for yourself must exercise all those glorious faculties which have come to you with your godlike personality. Were you less than a man in the image of God, then might some priest with flowing robe and swinging censer take his stand between you and the everlasting heavens, doing for you a something you could not do for yourself, working in you a something you could not work in yourself. But because you are not less—because you wear the very nature God himself has not disdained to wear—because you have a mind that with its almost infinite reach can touch the extreme edges of creation—because there is a heart in you that can be satisfied with no less meat than love, and which from all human love turns insatiate upward, crying after the love of God—because of all this do the heavens ring out upon you the statement

of your responsibility: "Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."

Let it not be understood that this truth is stated to the detriment of that other truth that God is to work in us to will and to do. The foundation of all our trust is in that great Spirit who only can strengthen and purify the heart. And it is because of our belief in this truth, and our deep sense of its importance, that we dwell as we do on the subject of human responsibility. If there is one method more effectual than another for destroying our sense of dependence on the Spirit of God, it is to sap our personality by making our religious progress dependent on a something which is done outside ourselves—on a man, on a rite, on a church. For then the work of salvation has been made to pass into a sphere over which we have no direct control, and where the Spirit of God cannot possibly work in relation to us. But when I declare to you that the work of salvation can only be carried on by the agency of our own personality, and in the silent and lonely depths of our own consciousness—I cast you into a sphere where the Spirit of God does operate, and where you can have no helper but *Him*. Then I exhort you as the Apostle Paul exhorted, strengthening his charge with everlasting consolation: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you."

And this sense of personality will make the Judgment bar a tremendous solitude. "Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."

It is the court-martial. The captain of a noble ship is to be tried for its loss. To him it was committed—not to any other; but absolutely to his discretion and management. No man on board had a right to dispute his orders. And under his

command on a smooth sea she met her doom. Now he, and not another, stands there to give account. What has he done with the ship given into his charge? Let him speak!

On that last great day as never before shall be torn and stript away every rag that could hide us, and we shall stand forth in our naked personality. To us was committed a charge—what have we done with it? To us were granted certain talents—are they out circulating and multiplying in the great commerce of the world, or do they lie buried and mouldering? Speak, soul—speak! If thou hast never before ventured to utter thy real self to God; *now* thou shalt hear thy voice shivering in the eternal silence. Thou has disclaimed thy personality; thou hast suffered others to think for thee, and to carry thee; thou hast forgotten that thou shouldst give account of thyself. And now at the word of God thy terrible identity stands up within thee—that immortal thing, thyself—thy godlike self, so long huddled and battened down out of view. Thou standest alone—giddy in the sense of it. What hast thou done?—speak!

And there, in that solitude, we each one yet shall stand. Life will be past—that strange country which like a land full of thickets and caves, offers a thousand hiding-places for the man who would escape from the eye of Truth. How little is seen what we really are, by ourselves or others! But *there* we shall have no hiding-place.

In all this there is nothing to alarm or depress. It is possible to give account with joy and not with grief. To him that is truly living in Jesus Christ there is no condemnation. But less than this—and this in its widest and most glorious sense, will not be enough. We need that perfection of personality which is only experienced when we can say with Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

God is a Heart.—You think of God as a statute-book, and you think when you sin that you offend against a code. I have another story for you. God is a living—loving Heart who is giving Himself to his creatures; and when you sin you smite the heart of your God which He has laid bare to you. Every sin *pains* God. To say the opposite is to announce Atheism. Never will you be really contrite for sin till you feel that He bore your sins in his own body on the tree. This is what breaks our hearts.

There is a man who is arrested for crime. Before the magistrate he is dogged and fierce. But in his own cell on the first night of imprisonment there comes to him the vision of his home. His wife sits on the bed sobbing in her agony. His little children around are weeping with their mother. He sees the misery his sin has brought on others. And in that hour the manhood in him that has been drugged asleep for years gets up and shakes itself. The gate of tears is opened. His own misery disappears in the suffering of others. He feels he would willingly bear all if only they might go free. He repents!

Self and God.—"He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall find it." These words have often been applied to martyrdom. That sense is included, but the full meaning is, that there are two lives—one which pivots on the centre self, the other which pivots on the centre God. And Christ means that if you give up the lower you will gain the higher, and if you keep the lower you will lose the higher.

Life spent for oneself is a failure—a failure for self, for one's fellows, and for God. Life spent for God is a success.

How do the trees of the forest grow? They stretch up their arms towards heaven—they throw themselves out-

ward. This great yearning up and out is a law of growth in nature. Look on the tree which has transgressed this law. It has doubled back upon itself; it is a dwarfed and twisted and clubbed and gnarled thing.

Some people talk of the gradual development of human nature into the Divine nature. Development of *what?* What can you develop from a centre of selfishness? You must be unhinged, and put upon a new centre, by the love of Christ taking the place of the love of self. "*For my sake*"—these words are the secret principle of the true life.

Strength for Temptation.—You wonder at the failure in your Christian course. You wonder that you are unable continuously to overcome temptation.

Now this raises a great question—how temptations are to be met.

Your method has been to—*meet* them. And you have been overthrown. Till at last you have lost heart, and you expect to be overthrown. And you see no reason to think that better days will come.

An Englishman goes out to the western coast of Africa, and his doctor says to him: "Your only chance of overcoming the fevers is to keep up your bodily health. It will not do when the fever attacks you to begin. You must be always ready. You must meet the enemy, not by special treatment, but through your constitution!"

A youth goes into the examination hall at the University, and the advice of his tutors has been: "Do not depend on yourself at the time to deal with the questions that will come before you. For each special question you cannot prepare; but pay attention to your studies beforehand, and then meet the special questions out of your fund of knowledge."

Men yield to temptation because when the temptation comes it finds them constitutionally low. They are empty, and have no resistance in them. Had Christ been abiding in their hearts, He had looked out of the window, and the temptation had flown away. With Him the heart is satisfied—is full of peace and love. Then sin has lost its power. It is the hungry man who is tempted to steal bread.

Without Christ you are like an autumn leaf, and when the loud tempest of evil rushes past, it snaps you off, and bears you helplessly with it. But with Christ you are like a castle wall, which no hurricane can either dint or shake.

Therefore the teaching is : " Abide in me and I in you." Not, " Run into me when the danger is at hand." But, " Be in me all the time."

Imputed Righteousness.—People say, " How can God count men righteous when they are not righteous? " How do you know they are not? Christ says that a man sins in his heart by his will to sin, even though the sin never comes to open fruit. This is his distinct teaching. And can we not also say that the man is righteous whose *whole will* is to be righteous, even though, through weakness, his will should never form itself in deed?

THE WILL IN RELIGION

"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."—MARK ix. 24.

How to approach God, how to maintain our union with God—these are the questions which more than all besides we need to have answered. For, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our hands, we are yet stumbling and straying in our attempts to draw near to God, because we are ignorant how to do it.

Our subject is, THE WILL IN RELIGION.

The mind of man may be roughly divided into three parts—the part that thinks, the part that feels, and the part that wills.

With some persons there is always a tendency to make religion subsist mainly in the intellectual part of our nature. They consider it essential to hold truly and clearly the great historical facts of Christianity. They consider it essential to have most absolutely correct views on what are called the cardinal doctrines. Even a leaning toward error concerning the Trinity or the Atonement might be fatal. Of these men controversialists are made. These are the men who start heresies, and run them to the death. These are the men who rack and burn.

Then there are others who are more inclined to make religion subsist in the emotional part of our nature. Their own feelings have become inextricably twisted even with the love and grace of God. It would be nearly impossible for them to think of a religious truth as existing unless they saw it reflected in their own feelings. If from any cause they arise in the morning with clear head and jubilant heart they

seem to hear bells ringing up in heaven, and they rejoice in the love of God, and the salvation of Christ. But if they arise (as who does not full often?) with thought weary, and feeling dim, and the thick mist stretching over all the plain of life, immediately faith and hope go down together. Heaven recedes into an uncertain dream; God is the unlikeliest thing in all creation.

But the true centre of religion is in the Will. Religion cannot stand in the intellect, religion cannot stand in the emotions, religion can only stand in the Will. And the reason is, that a man's mind does not always represent his true self, that a man's feelings do not always represent his true self, but that a man's will does represent his true self, and that justly and invariably.

You are what your will is. This is commonly admitted in the world. Indeed society is hung together by the recognition of it. No one blames the poor cripple who shuffles painfully along the street. No one blames the wretch who in the frenzy of his fever seeks to destroy those around him. No one blames him whose unconscious hand has carried death to his brother's heart. For in none of these cases is the will concerned.

And when we attempt that estimate by which we call a man good or bad, it is his will we take for our rule of judgment. We do not judge him by the capacity of his intellectual powers, whether it be large or small; we do not judge him by the range of his knowledge, whether it be narrow or wide; we do not judge him by the tender sensibilities which may at times be wakened in his nature; we judge him by his will, by the resolve and intention of his soul, as well as we can guess them from the acts of his life.

Now God is nothing less than we are. If all that

is highest and purest within us refuses to call a man good because he is rich or powerful or learned—or bad because he is poor and feeble and ignorant, we may feel sure that we have not set our judgment-bar higher than the judgment-bar of God. If all that is highest and purest within us demands that judgment should be past in view of the intention and purpose, and that a man should be taken as being the thing he himself would be, then we may feel sure that God is judging us by no lower standard.

It must not however be understood that the intellectual and emotional parts of our nature have no place in our religious life. No words can overstate the importance of just doctrinal views, and of warm religious feelings. But it is well to know that neither the presence nor the absence of creeds or feelings can of itself make or unmake our religious state. We stand before God not as we believe or as we feel, but as we *will*.

From this brief exposition of a great principle, let us gain some useful teaching.

1. *This view will help to save us from a shifting and uncertain religious experience.* You need continually to know where you are as respects God. Just where your will is. Does the whole strength of your will say: Lord, I am bought with a price, and I yield myself to Thee for ever? Then you are yielded to God up to all the present possibilities of your soul. Does the whole strength of your will say: Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief? Then you are trusting in God up to all the present possibilities of your soul. And it is yours to know that you are altogether God's, and God is altogether yours.

In this descent upon the Will we leave behind the unstable platform of feeling. We are down on rock. We take no account whatever of emotion. We even

grow to forget its existence. The heart may be a garden of fragrant feelings, or a barren wilderness, but the sun shines on in heaven all the same. The fading of our rose-leaves does not change the solid firmament above us. We have come into union with the eternal truths, and that is enough.

To live thus with our religious state consciously based in the Will, is to live fortified in peace. How differently is it with many Christians. They depend for all assurance on the state of their feelings. Now they are lifted on a sudden wave of feeling, and it seems easy to believe, and impossible not to hope. But anon the tide of feeling has ebbed, and the heart lies stranded and alone. The eternal verities are nothing more to them than certain sensations within themselves.

They are like a man who rises in the morning, saying to his wife: "Somehow I am not quite happy about that ten thousand pounds in the bank." And his wife asks if he has any reason for his disquietude. "No," he answers, "I have no reason, but I do not *feel* the investment." What man judges by his sensations of his bank's security? But they by their sensations would try the pillars of the throne of God.

Forget your feelings. Live by faith. And what is faith but the confidence that when we do with an honest will separate ourselves from evil, then God has become a Father unto us? Apart from this consciousness in the will there can be no true faith. You cannot believe that all things are working together for your good unless you are striving to love God. For if you could believe it without this consciousness, you would believe a lie.

To receive this doctrine I am now enforcing—to regard yourself henceforth as being in very truth the thing you will and purpose to be, would be to many

a Christian person like passing from Egypt into Canaan. The doubt, the gloom, the uncertainty, the fluctuation would henceforth be experienced no more. Having yielded yourself to Him, you would go on calmly in the confidence that you were his, and He was yours. You would know that He only asks of you to give yourself to Him and to trust Him each moment as best you can. He does not expect from you that effort of will which He sees in more advanced Christians. He asks you to do nothing more than you can do just as you are. And if your will swerves or fails, He only expects you to return it to Him the moment you are conscious of the failure. And all this without reference to frames or feelings. All this independent of everything but the great Gospel truths on which you are relying, whether you feel them or not.

And thus practically our religious life is in our own hands. Let no man sing—

> "Do I love the Lord, or no?
> Am I his, or am I not?"

If you are not his, make yourself his. Make yourself his in one moment by the exercise of the Godlike prerogative of will. All this it is in your power to do, and to keep doing for ever; because the Divine help is never wanting for those who honestly seek after God.

The walkers by feeling and faith might be compared to two travellers who cross the same country, the one treading on the firm highway, the other, having forsaken the highway, now fording the river, now scaling the steep rock, now floundering in the dismal morass. To the one all is difficulty and danger; to the other all is easy and safe. And which will sooner reach the end?

2. *This view shows us the true nature of sin.* The only thing that is really sin to us is wilful transgression.

This does not interfere with the truth of original sin. We are the children of a sinning race, and we come into being each one with the taint of evil in us. Every man feels this for himself. Every man feels for himself that the ready and natural thing is to do evil, and the far and difficult thing is to do well. There are many doctrines that come to us by revelation; the doctrine of original sin comes by consciousness.

Nor does my assertion that the only thing that is sin to us is wilful transgression, interfere with the great truth of sinful tendency in us produced and deepened by our own actual transgression. By our sinful indulgence in the past we have more or less nourished habits of evil, which now cling about us like chains we cannot put off. In these two great senses we are sinful creatures, without our own wilful transgression at present to intensify the mischief. And for redemption from sin in these two great senses we stand in need of the Atonement of that great Being who shall save his people from their sins. But when all this is said it still remains true that *now* we only sin in wilful transgression—that the sins which pollute the soul and separate from God in the present time, must be sins wrought in the present time with the concurrence of the will. All the rest is beyond our power to amend or change; and having committed it to the great Sin-bearer, we may allow ourselves to be done with it.

And with these two forms of sin I have mentioned, there may also be classed *involuntary sins* committed every day. Let him who does not think there can be any such thing as involuntary sin try to hold his being for twenty-four hours in perfect obedience to his highest ideal of right. Evil tendencies, evil

habits will supplant all his watchfulness and defy all his strength. When he would do good he will find the evil present with him. And this is the experience of every Christian. He cannot do the things he would.

But the sin committed without the will is not sin in the strict and real sense in which I am now defining sin. And the man who calls it sin does himself a grievous injustice. For he insists on plunging his soul into continual condemnation. This involuntary sinfulness is just the disease of our moral nature—a disease of which we have no power to rid ourselves. We have no physic wherewith to reach it—no Jordan wherein to wash it away. If it were a matter of the will—if some Elisha from God were to stand before us, and promise us the cleansing, what condition would seem too hard as the means to so great a blessing? What should we not give—what should we not do to gain it? But since it is not in our power to be rid of this disease, the little acts which flow from it without any sanction of the will, are not really our acts at all. And this spiritual disease is to be borne with patience and submission just like a physical disease. If your whole soul disclaims and disapproves it, you are no more responsible for its continued existence with you, than you are responsible for the headache or the toothache. Each we dislike, and each we endeavour patiently to bear.

And the pressure upon him of the evil of his nature becomes in the hands of God a means for discipline and sanctification. In what other way could we so well learn the lesson of our own utter worthlessness and helplessness, and of our absolute and continual need of a great God and a Saviour? In what other way could we so well be admonished that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth? By what other hand than the hand of this stern trial could so well

be lighted that great lamp of hope which, flinging up its radiance as against the walls of heaven, shows us the land where already they are walking who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb?

Dwell then in your will, and hold nothing to be actual sin against God—suffer nothing to bring you into condemnation, and to break your communion with Him, but that which is wrought with the deliberate compliance of the Will. All the rest may be sin in another sense, but in this sense it is not sin. Stand separate and apart from your evil nature on the adamantine foothold of the Will. Behold your evil nature as a something to which by your will you are dead; "reckon yourself dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ your Lord."

Let us peep into that old dungeon where the prisoner is rotting in his chains. The dungeon is low down in the tower, and the water from the castle moat gathers near where he lies in the corner of the chamber. And through the long summer it grows putrid, and rolls up its sickening fumes around him. He hates it—he loathes it; he would give all he has in the world to be freed from the curse of it. And yet his will is powerless.

Lover of the Christ, thou art that captive. That black pool of sin which festers beside thee is no longer of thy will, and while thy will stands by hating and loathing it, while the cry of the heart is "who shall deliver me?" suffer no devil in hell to spatter thee with the filth of its condemnation.

3. *The view of the Will I have advanced will also teach us how to commence religion.*

On the threshold of the Christian life men often wait long months or years, for lack of knowing how to take the first step over it. Their religious conscious-

ness has been awakened by the Spirit of God, and they have found themselves sinful and feeble. But their sinfulness and feebleness begin at once to engross their attention. And they are closed in with a great despair by the sense that it is not in their own power to change themselves. Often to such men the great Saviour and his finished salvation are preached in vain. For they make even the acceptance of the finished salvation in some way a question of power. They *cannot* accept it.

Persons in this state must be met with a full recognition of the worst things they declare of themselves. Yes, they are powerless. Right through their whole nature they are depraved. The sensations the perceptions, the reason, the instincts, the passions, the emotions all are touched with the consuming plague of sin. And to none of these can they stretch forth a healing hand.

But there is one part of their nature in which they yet have control. It is the Will. It is still possible by an act of pure will to present themselves to God, and to trust in his Gospel. It is possible to stammer forth, " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

And this first act of the Will in the religious direction may be poor and weak as the first effort of a babe to walk. All this is of no consequence, provided only the poor weak effort be the best the soul can put forth. It is clear that if the babe tries its best to walk it cannot be blamed that it does not succeed. And the important question respecting your first effort is not, " How did it succeed? " but, " Did he try his best? " That is the question they ask in Heaven.

And the Will, like every faculty, is susceptible of infinite development. The man who uses his will for God to-day, will use it better to-morrow. Every day the faculty will grow and expand, till the small

acorn, which only peered at first with its tender leaves through the green grass of the dale—the small slight thing which the foot of the red deer bounding by might have crushed for ever, becomes at last an oak, with its giant bole planted in the earth, and its broad green walls bared to the stroke of the northern tempest.

This day you can *will*. This day there is in you a certain strength of will power, and however small it be, it is for this that God is asking. It is of the door of that will of yours that it is written: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock!" And having opened that door as best you can this moment—having answered to Him who stands there, "Come in, and sup with me!" having cried from the depth of your heart, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"—it is yours to go home in tranquillity and joy. You are God's. From this hour you are God's. Though you have yet no ears to hear it, there is singing over you among the Angels.

And this sweet conviction is to be yours apart from any glowing sign, apart from any swelling emotion. You have given yourself to Him with just the strength you have at this moment, and He cannot have rejected you. O it is so easy, so ready, so within the reach of your hand this hour to present yourself to God a living sacrifice—to trust in his forgiving love through Jesus Christ our Lord!

4. *This view of the place the Will holds in Religion will also show us the importance of strengthening and developing it.*

The Will is God's vicegerent in us. But forces have arisen in our nature which have put down the Will from its high empire. Bloated desires and ruffian passions, in the larger number of men, have usurped that clean white throne in the heart which

God erected for the seat of Will. Where is the man who, having seen the right, and desiring to do the right, is able to accomplish his desire? Where is the man who feels that his whole nature waits obedient for the utterance of his righteous will? Where is the man who with strong hand represses every rebellion of evil within him? At the best the kingdom of his heart is a kingdom torn with intestine war, where the supreme power struggles languidly with a host of oppressing foes. And the greatest question of the inner life is how to clothe the Will once more with its own imperial strength.

For this high end let the usurper be cast out. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." Whatever be the form in which Evil has chiefly mastered you, in that form it must be met and crucified. Some are overcome by desires of the mind, some by desires of the flesh; but however overcome, we have in our turn to fight against the infernal rule that holds us down. Every time we quell and trample under foot the invader, we win back so much of lost power to the Will. The next battle will be easier—the next conquest will be more glorious. And never must this warfare cease while one of our Lord's enemies sits supreme within us, dictating to us the service we owe to Him alone.

Let the Will also be developed by constant and courageous exercise. Never be afraid to will! You may plead: "But what if I fail?" Then will again. Never be afraid to "present your body a living sacrifice," even though all past experience gives you the bitter history that these great acts of the Will in consecration were never fully sustained in actual service. For God's sake and your soul's sake, be not daunted! Dwell in the Will! Dwell in the Will as in a fortress! Tell Christ, your Brother, that there,

in your will, you are his, and his for ever. And whatever the failure may be outside in actual achievement, give heed to it that no infection of failure break through into the Will. May God give you courage here, and not only courage to hold your own, but courage to enclose, if that be possible, ever wider and wider spaces of your being with the reaches of consecration. And this courage must have its reward. The Will thus boldly adventured in exercise will grow from day to day. And day by day you will have a sense becoming clearer and clearer that your true life is in the Will, and that the life outside is not the life whereby God is judging you. And with this sense another sense grander still—that your will is passing into union with that other Will which is working all things after its own counsel. The more your will grows in righteous exercise the more will you feel that through the Will of God it is growing into union with all things. You will move with the march of the universe. The shining of suns, the blowing of flowers, the great world of men, the joys that gladden and the sorrows that blight, and all the strange mysteries of this mortal life—all, all will become yours through the growing knowledge within you, that you are Christ's, and that Christ is God's.

And with the odours of that name of Christ let me fill your souls, for an ending to these words. For here I would say the largest thing of all. Preserve and nourish that precious will you have by giving it to Christ. Without this all the rest will be a failure. With this all the rest will be a splendid success. Your will can never rule till first it bows. In proportion to the subjection of your will to Christ, will be the subjection of everything else to your will. Abide in Him, and He in you.

When the strong wind is blowing abroad, the trees

all bend one way, the smoke all drifts one way, the weathercocks all point one way. Here to-day are hundreds of human wills, and the great Will of God is breathing past us toward righteousness. Does every will bend and point with Him? Is every heart so free from earthly attachments that it moves easily with the impulse of the wind of God? With all the strength of our will does each of us yield all we have to Him? From the depth of an honest heart can each of us exclaim: "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief?"

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

All things are yours.—This world exists for you, and you exist for God's salvation. Notwithstanding its darkness and terror, the whole meaning of the world to you is *love*. The earthquake was for the Philippian jailer, not the jailer for the earthquake. Sorrows, diseases, social calamities are not to be masters of you—you are to be masters of them. They exist to minister to your salvation. And trust in Christ gives you the lordship of all.

Some men of science would tell you that God takes a great deal of care of the machinery of the material world, but that you are only a tenth part of the way as high in his esteem—of very little importance indeed. The Gospel does not say so. It announces that *all is for us*.

Allow the creation for one moment to come between you and your Father, and where are you? The sport of the tempest of which you should be the master.

A Divine Revelation.—You say: "We have no need of a Revelation from God, and I do not believe in a Revelation. We know that God is love, and that is enough."

You know that God is love—and, pray, how do you know it? Did Plato tell you that? or Socrates? or any other philosopher? Nay, it is the very book which professes to be a revelation from God which has given you the truth. The truth you take, and the book that brought it you reject.

I am going down one evening to see you at your country house, and I drop a post-card to say: "I shall be with you by such a train at such an hour." You read the card, and you say: "Of course; he will be here by such a train, at such an hour. I know that—why does he send a post-card to say it?"

You know it; but would you have known it without the post-card?

I can scarcely understand the state of mind which takes from the Bible the chief jewel it carries, and then drives the Bible itself out of doors as a pauper.

It would seem to me just as sensible to say: "Shakespeare—men make such a talk about Shakespeare. For my part I do not believe there ever was such a man. Why, every good passage they attribute to him is in everybody's hands. We don't want Shakespeare to get them."

Methods of Conversion.—Many remain without Gospel peace for a long time because they lay out the method in which Christ is to enter their hearts. It is to be with joy —it is to be with music—it is to be with signs in the heaven above and in the earth beneath.

Some persons are converted with wonderful ecstasies. And a good thing such raptures are when they come naturally and from God. But *most* persons are not converted thus. Because the king enters some hearts with pomp, will you refuse Him when he comes to you lowly and sitting on an ass? We must not decline the ordinary method because there is an extraordinary.

A certain farmer calls his friends in joy and wonder to behold a field of ripened wheat. It came up, he said, in one night, with a purple cloud hanging overhead, and the skies filled with ravishing music. A very excellent thing indeed to have one's wheat in such a way! But what if all the others should thenceforth decline the ordinary method, and wait in expectation of this.

Doubt Unreasonable.—Trust in God is an easy thing when the inclination goes that way, and all is bright. But when our hearts and our circumstances are clouded, it is different. Nevertheless, then most of all is the time to *insist on believing*. The most unreasonable thing a reasonable being can do, is to doubt God. And if there could be a something *more* unreasonable than the *most*, it is to trust Him one day and to doubt Him the next. Lay the foundation of your faith on intelligent grounds. You believe there is a God of love. Now while you believe that it is inconsistent to doubt. Never doubt again till you

have retracted that faith, and openly declared, There is not a God of love. Let the great faith arch like the heavens above all your shifting feelings. Has God altered because some little candle in your life has been lighted or quenched? Life must be a failure with you while you allow your circumstances or your feelings to make your faith. Your faith must stand independent of all such things, the great pillar of your existence. In darkness and in light *insist on believing*.

The Power of the Resurrection.—The Apostle prayed that he might know the power of Jesus' resurrection. And it is part of that power to give us the victory over death. Death to Paul was a maimed and wounded foe. An arrow from the strong Archer had pierced him. And the knowledge of this we need continually. In a degree we have it. We have it so instinctively that we scarcely know we have it. For Jesus' resurrection has changed the whole theory of existence. Without it death is a fathomless gloom—a grey abyss; and down the unsearchable depths the stream of life and joy and beauty pours for ever. But with it death is a little stream that divides two fields of being.

Now see the mother enter the nursery at night among her sleeping children. She passes from one to another with a fond glance at the rosy sleeper, a kiss, and a murmured "God bless thee, my darling!" But well she knows that winds and frosts may assail her tender buds. Could she behold her treasure of love so calmly without the power of Jesus' resurrection—without the confidence that no thief can steal it from her. And when the threatening sickness touches one of her children, even her mother's heart has a central citadel of peace which nothing can destroy. Jesus is Master of death; death would only transplant her darling to the paradise above.

Earthly love is something new since Jesus' resurrection. We cannot do without it. God help the loving wife who does not know it! God help the bereaved husband by the grave there who does not know it!

God my exceeding Joy.—We are made to be happy, and

no man will seek God aright till he finds the service of God is happiness. How can we get you to know this—you, who have been seeking your happiness away from God, and have not found it.

O we want for the world a great exhibition of men happy in God! We have had our great exhibitions of science and art. But we want a great exhibition of spiritual results—of men strong in service, and pure in enjoyment, and calm in trouble, and tender in sympathy, and large in love, and joyful always.

We want to *show* what a paradise God's love can make of life.

When the grounds around your house are lovely, the passers-by stop to feast their eyes with gazing. Christian, make your life a beautiful garden, at which men will look with wonder. Force them to feel—*that man has what I want.*

There are many who would be ready to seek for God, if once they had the thought that in the service of God is the happiness they want and cannot find. They want a *motif* for religion. God forgive us, Christians, with our shaded brows, and our lustreless eyes, and our joyless lives, who are robbing them of this *motif*.

A merchant in London has a new clerk in his office. The lad shows no interest in business. His master thinks, Shall I send him home? Then he decides what he will do. He says, " James, come down on Saturday evening to my place, and spend the Sunday with me." The lad is amazed, but he goes down by the train. Then his master takes care to have him over his conservatories and gardens, and to make him see all the wealth and splendour of the house, till the youth is bewildered. Then, quite casually, he tells the clerk how he himself was once a clerk, and how he has reached all this by perseverance and industry.

That youth goes back to London with a new thought. Business to him hitherto has been an array of puzzling ledgers. Now it is a beautiful house and grounds. His resolve is made. He shall win what his master has won.

You say, This is a low view of religion, that we are to seek it for happiness. It is; but when men are low they

must begin with low views. They must stand on the lowest rung of the ladder before they stand on the highest. I know a time will come in your history when you will be done with thinking of happiness. Your cry will be: I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart! You will be a *man* then—one of God's men, walking up with the great manhood of heaven. But now you are a child, and you must have childish things. There are few who in this world get beyond the point where they are helped by the thought that God's service is joy. That thought will be a stimulus.

THE HELPING SPIRIT

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." —Rom. viii. 26.

By "groaning" we are to understand an intense yearning for that which is not yet in possession. The prisoner sitting in his dungeon "groans" for the day that brings his freedom.

The Apostle has just said that the whole creation groans for a something in the future. And not only the creation, but Christians also, "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit," groan within themselves, "waiting for the adoption, that is the redemption of the body."

But this is not all. Not only do Christians groan within themselves waiting for a certain good they can apprehend, but the Spirit also groans in them, waiting for a certain good they cannot apprehend. Up to the last point of merely human strength they themselves can yearn for the unrevealed. Beyond that they enter on a region of weakness, and here the Spirit helps their weakness, and takes up the work which they themselves unassisted are unable to carry on.

1. Let us see clearly what the Apostle means by infirmity, or weakness. There are two views taken of man. The first, that he is a being complete in himself, and who only needs a proper development of his latent capacities. The second, that he is a being incomplete in himself, and who can only reach his completeness in union with God.

The statement in the text is that man is weak in relation to his higher destinies, and that he needs the Spirit of God to help him in his weakness.

Where now is the man who affirms that he has it in his own power to fill out all the bounds of his nature and destiny? He has an ideal of virtue and righteousness, and his aim is to realise in himself this ideal. He has seen that life for self only is a low thing and a base thing; and he has seen that the self principle has its dwelling-place in the deepest part of our nature, twisted about the very roots of thought and motive. He has seen that this self principle, if left to its own action, unguarded and unrestrained, becomes the author of all envyings and hatreds and strivings—of all those sins whether of thought or deed which we sum up in the one word, unrighteousness. And having seen these things, he has endeavoured to reform his outward life, and much more his heart, of which the outward life is only an expression. For it would not content him to see the outward life conformed to righteousness while the inward life was still conformed to unrighteousness.

And now let this man proceed in his own strength to amend the disorders he deplores. With the current of a certain inward tendency against him, and with the current of a long habit in evil against him, he sets himself to a labour which will task all the resources of his highest manhood. Shall I say that no man in his own unaided strength can accomplish the work, or shall I not rather ask, Who has accomplished it? Is there any intelligent and enlightened man who can stand forth before his fellows, and demand, Which of you convinceth me of sin?—understanding sin in its widest and most spiritual sense. If such a man be found, let him be sure that his first professions of purity will be met by the common sense of his

fellows with the peltings of honest ridicule and contempt.

And yet we are willing just now, for sake of the argument, to accept his story as true. We are willing to believe that by the exercise of his own unaided strength he has reached his ideal of virtue. And having conceded this, we ask, What has he reached after all?

There is a woman who rises morning by morning with the thought of what *duties* she owes to her husband. She is anxious lest she fail in anything. She desires to be a model wife and mother. But her highest service is the service of duty.

There is another woman who loves her husband and children with an absorbing love. To spend herself for them is her one thought and joy. She has no need of cold calculation to help out her daily service—love is the inspiration of all. Not only is the round of duty filled, but it is done with sunshine and singing. In her eyes there is a light, and on her lips there is a smile which duty never made. How different the homes where love and duty reign!

There are men who propose to themselves a life of perfect righteousness. Who has succeeded in the effort? I ask; and yet I am ready to grant that all who make the effort may succeed. And having succeeded, what have they done? They have reached that place in God's universe which a woman would reach in her house who should say, "Where is the duty I have omitted? Where is the wrong I have done? Am I not a perfect wife and mother?"—who should say this with no consciousness that out and away beyond all the sphere of duty there stretches the infinite realm of love; and that her true wifehood and motherhood must be wrought out and fulfilled in that supreme realm where the gales blowing from

heaven are felt, and the beat of the angels' wings goes past.

What is it to love? Is it to stand still, and look two ways? Is it to coldly calculate the right and the wrong? Is it to move in the paths of stainless virtue? For men think that having reached the topmost height of virtue, there is nothing more above that can be attained. There is! Above the topmost height of earth stretch away the unfathomable heavens. Above the topmost height of duty stretch away the unfathomable heavens of love. What is it to love? It is to have done with mere mountain-climbing for ever. It is to feel that the topmost height gained were still only a height of earth, and the clay beneath our feet as base as the clay of the valley. It is to have gone into fellowship with higher races who mount up with wings before their God. It is to burn and palpitate with that Divine passion which is hinted to us in the first exquisite love of two young hearts, when the world is steeped in splendour, and life has become a rapture of devotion to another. It is to fulfil the life of duty when the very name of duty has ceased to be remembered. It is to experience the loss of self in being lifted from the ground, and drawn up into the life that God Himself is living, with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl. This it is to love—all this and nothing less in that fulness and completeness of love for which we wait in some higher state; and this in part even at present in a life of true and deep communion with our Lord.

The perfection of our nature then is not in virtue and righteousness, but in that love which unites us with God, and which brings all virtue and righteousness as its first and necessary fruit. And because our perfection is in love are we weak in ourselves to attain

it. If it consisted in an unfaltering righteousness, in an unsullied virtue both of heart and life, there might be ground for affirming the sufficiency of man to accomplish his own destiny—though even then we seek in vain for the man who professes to have accomplished it. But when our perfection is in love —in sharing the nature of God—in being something so different from what we are at present, that we shall move naturally in the love which now we cannot reach for a single hour; when all this is so, where is the man who will announce his sufficiency? where is the man who will deny the great Bible truth, that as respects this higher life of love, without Christ we can do nothing? While perfection is supposed to consist in doings and not-doings, it is a something near at hand, a something tangible and plain, with which common sense and resolution may find themselves bold enough to deal. But when perfection is not in doings and not-doings, but in a supreme state of the very loftiest part of us, which no word or will of ours can affect, to change it from what it is, or to hold it fixed and constant in some better mood—where is the man who will undertake it? If such indeed there be, then let him straightway begin, as the shortest way to a knowledge of his weakness. Let him say to his heart, "Heart, from this hour be filled and ruled by love!" And he shall learn forthwith that the wild bird flying far above his head, or the wave rolling wide on the sea, or the voice of the resistless thunder, is as much under the control of his will as the movement of his own deepest heart.

The teaching of the Bible all through, and the special teaching of our text, then, is that man is weak in himself to achieve his own higher life. Man in himself is a very powerful being. But there is a point where his power ceases. To repeat the illustration

I have used, he can climb to the top of the highest mountain, but he cannot ascend on beyond to the sky.

2. In this infirmity or weakness the Spirit helps. The weakness is no chance condition which has befallen us, out of which the Spirit in pity helps us. It is that state into which every being with a spiritual nature must come when he reaches the edge of his purely spiritual growth. While he was in mere animalism or intellectualism he was sufficient for himself. But now the spiritual life is expanding before him, and no being without God can create or sustain the spiritual life.

To possess a spiritual nature, however undeveloped, is to have the whole spiritual universe open before us. For the great Spirit of God stands pledged to help us. And no resolve can be too bold, if we but advance on this heavenly Canaan, conscious of our own weakness, conscious of the Almighty strength.

When the root which has lain in the earth the long winter through first begins to feel out after the day above, it is the drawing of the blessed sun that inspires its movement. It cannot see the sun—it cannot see the day—but it has a certain consciousness of both. In itself it is all weakness, but the sun has taken it in hand, and the sun helps in all its infirmities. The sun can do for it what it never could do for itself. Nor will he forsake the work till he has lifted it into his own shining—first a sprout, then a budding plant, last of all a perfect flower that shall behold him face to face.

In the spiritual sphere the Spirit of God is the omnipotent sun. Our hearts are poor roots lying buried in this earthly soil. But there is a boundless power to search down after us, to find us out, to touch us into life, and to raise us into the perfection of the higher day.

The great need of our hearts is a faith in this Power as boundless as the Power itself. And after that we need to see that to interfere with the work of the Spirit is to hinder it. We too often think that we, as roots, have a part of our own growing to do. Just as if a root could make itself grow! We endeavour to bestow on our hearts, or to excite in our hearts, what only the Spirit of God can give.

Yet this is no plea for folding of hands and idleness. The Spirit *helps* our infirmities. And He helps by doing his part of the work, and leaving us to do ours. It is against the attempt to help the Spirit in that part of the work which is exclusively his, that I guard you.

The heavens drop their rains upon the farmer's lands, and the farmer, with a lightened heart, returns to his tillage. He quite understands that he cannot help the heavens, even in their work of helping him. He quite understands that were he to spend the time due to tillage in an effort to manufacture more rain-clouds, his farm must go to ruin. He quite understands, that were he to trust to the work of the heavens only, and not to work himself, the heavens would shed their influences on him in vain.

There is then the widest difference between the Spirit helping you, and you helping the Spirit. The work of pouring in life and grace into these hearts of ours is his, and his alone. But it is yours to attend to that tillage of yourself which is laid down with great exactness in the Bible; uniting this activity with an unwavering trust that the great Spirit will help you on the spiritual side by pouring in that inspiration He alone commands.

When we see this with great distinctness, then we are ready to receive the Spirit's help. Till then, we keep pushing ourselves in the way to his continual

hindrance. The attitude of our hearts is to be that of surrender to his influence, with perfect trust that He will not *for a single moment* neglect to impart what we need.

3. The help of the Spirit in prayer is particularly specified. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." This is true of all prayer, but just here the Apostle does not speak of all prayer. He speaks of that particular prayer which he describes as "groaning" or yearning after a higher state of being. And he declares that man cannot put up this prayer as he ought, owing to his weakness and ignorance.

We have already seen that the Apostle uses the word "groan" three times in this passage. The creation groans, the Christian groans, and the Spirit in the Christian groans.

His theory is this. The present world is an imperfect world, as adapted to the imperfect state of the being who is its chief inhabitant. Imperfection never satisfies. And nothing in the world is satisfied. Distinguish now the three orders of this "groaning."

There is the *non-intelligent* "groaning" or yearning. Even the dumb creation asks instinctively for a higher mode of existence. The beasts are harassed and suffering. Since the beginning of things they have been in servitude to man, and in this servitude they have found him a hard taskmaster. And from those animals which could not yield him servitude he has wrung pleasure. Till all creation has groaned beneath his lash.

> "Man's scent the untamed creatures scarce can bear,
> As if his tainted blood defiled the air.
> The beasts of burden linger on their way,
> Like slaves that will not speak when they obey;
> Their faces, when their looks to us they raise,
> With something of reproachful patience gaze.
> All creatures round us seem to disapprove,
> Their eyes discomfort us with lack of love."

And even apart from the influence of man, nature itself presses with pain and sorrow on the very creatures it seems at the same time to nurture lovingly. When winter has bound the world in ice, whole tribes perish of hunger and cold. And when the summer has chased away this sorrow, the very warmth has bred the countless smaller creatures which are pests and scourges to every grade of animal life.

And thus, wherever we visit the animate world, it is shaded by a sorrow which seems to find a reflection even in the inanimate. But sorrow is always relative. Whatever mourns confesses the absence of a something. There is a sense of imperfection, and that very sense is the cry for the perfect. And the Apostle says that this groaning of the creature is true. *There is* a something it needs. It waits for the manifestation of the sons of God, and it shall yet be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the liberty of that glory.

Then there is the *intelligent* yearning. To man's intelligence the Gospel has come with certain ideas. It has unfolded to him his immortality. It has shown him the resurrection of Jesus in promise of his own resurrection. It has spoken of another order of body—the incorruptible in exchange for the corruptible. It has told him of another world, a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness dwelleth. All these have become luminous ideas in the mind of man. He can think of them. He can pray for them. He can yearn toward the glorious realities.

And how often we do yearn toward them from the depth of earth's sorrow. How often as life goes on, and the promises of youth fail, and our glad adventures for success end in darkness and shipwreck—how often we turn to these great thoughts with which the Gospel has brightened our future. The dying beggar

fills his squalid walls with rude songs about the New Jerusalem. And when we return from the graveyard where we have laid the precious dust, and see the old rooms and furniture so often lighted with that face which now will shine no more—the sense of desolation would be unbroken but for the sweet yearning for that other world which steals upon us. So that even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.

Lastly, we have the *super-intelligent* yearning. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And it is this part of the yearning which is exclusively the work of the Spirit of God. For although the future glory is to a certain extent conceivable, and does present itself to the mind in clearly-defined symbols of thought, yet the depth and fulness of that glory are beyond our present powers of apprehension. The best enlightened mind, the most exalted imagination, can touch only its hem and rim.

Here the Spirit helps. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." "The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." Before the mind of God all secrets lie open. The unconceived blessedness for which He has created us is familiar to Him. All the treasures of eternity are spread beneath his eye. And his Spirit, acting in view of this knowledge, yearns for the blessedness of his creatures. He longs to rejoice over them with singing. He longs to see of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied. He "groans" for the joy set before Him, for which He endured the cross, despising the shame. To all the limit of our knowledge *we* yearn for that which is before. But our

knowledge is small. It is closed in the pale of our narrow experience. And the narrow enclosure lies like a tiny field on the great continent of the Divine knowledge. He outside, beholding all, yearns with an infinite yearning—a yearning fed from all the wide-flowing fountains of blessedness that fill the deep eternities before us. And then this Spirit with his vast knowledge and his mighty yearnings comes down and dwells in the heart prepared to receive Him. And in that heart He yearns, absorbing the little human spirit into Himself, and bearing it onward upon the bosom of his own Divine longings into the wondrous realms which the human thought has never pierced. For so much greater is the spirit of man than the mind of man, that when the mind has been left below to crawl upon the ground, the spirit of man, rapt into the great movement of God, soars and bathes in the infinite realms above.

4. Therefore is it the Apostle says that the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which *cannot be uttered*. That is, they cannot be uttered in human language, since they transcend human thought. Everything must be possible to thought before it can be possible to language, for language is only the expression of thought.

Perhaps we may be assisted to understand this great subject by remembering that we have in Art an analogous condition. Every artist is a true artist in the measure that he is able, through his work, to arouse in other breasts the yearnings which cannot be uttered. This is the very secret of poetry. It is only poor poetry when the intellect can come out with its measuring rule, and give you the length and depth and height. He is a poor poet who finds language large enough for him. When everything can be expressed, it may be history or philosophy,

but it is not poetry. It is the unutterable which makes poetry. The spirit in us is for the moment lifted out from its intellectual cage, and it soars aloft, where we know not, whither we know not. It is all intense, ecstatic, unutterable.

For we are moving at present through worlds not realised. And our connection with these worlds cannot be through realisation. It can only be through what, for want of a better word, we must call *dream*. But, understand the secret of this dreaming. The dreams of a heart created by God must be according to the nature with which God has endowed it, and according to the nature of that universe for which He has created it. For although the worlds around it are not realised, yet to these worlds the heart is adapted. God has made it to suit them. And while yet the truth of this higher state of being is unknown to the intellect, the spirit is discontent without it—as the new-born babe is hungry, and cries for the food it has never tasted, and cannot know. All this in a low form in human art, in painting, and sculpture, and music, and poetry, vaguely yearning for some unconceived perfection. And all this in the highest form when the great Spirit of God flows in with his exalted inspiration, drawing on the soul to those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which mind has not conceived, but which yet stand out revealed to the spiritual sense of those who love Him. For the Spirit by his action on the human spirit makes it true to its own nature and the nature of God's universe; and then to this spirit made true He communicates the impulse of his own Spirit, driving it on into the unsearchable Before.

Further, the teaching of the Bible is in agreement with what we should expect when it proceeds to tell us that this lonely yearning—this bride seeking after

her bridegroom, Truth—shall yet be satisfied in an eternal union. It is God's way to make us first hunger for, and then possess. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known." "When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The long "groaning" in us shall be met with the fulness of its desiring. The unsearchable things of God shall be unfolded to our gaze. And this larger exhibition of Truth is to be the foundation of the higher life of the soul.

5. We can easily see that this "groaning" in the Christian's heart must be "according to the will of God." God himself has inspired it, and God can inspire nothing opposed to his own will.

This assurance should be like a strong citadel in the centre of every heart. When we feel those sweet drawings toward some infinite good which earth can never bestow, and which we cannot even figure to ourselves—when we feel that something within us thirsts for God, even the living God, we are to know that it is not our own spirit that yearns, but that God's Spirit in us yearns according to his own will, and thus that we are not lured on by some deceitful mirage, building its bright walls and domes on the empty wind of the desert—we are to know that these walls we behold, however faintly, are really the walls of the New Jerusalem—that these are really her towers flashing far up in the indescribable light.

There are many things for which we may pray according to our own will, and still with perfect propriety, if in submission to the will of God. For your circumstances, shattered by some blow of fortune, you may fitly cry: Lord, restore what Thou hast taken! For your child, about to sink into the gulf of death, you may fitly cry: Lord, give me back

my child! But in all such cases, however much our will is yielded to the will of God—however earnestly to the cry, Let this cup pass from me!—we add: Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done—we cannot but feel that the prayer has had its first birth in our own desire. But here it is different. The yearning of God's Spirit in us for the unutterable things has had its source in God, not in us. It is He that has first seen and thought of and desired. It is He in us that pleads. And thus, in this, the supremest effort of our being, we have the bliss of knowing that we are moving "according to the will of God."

This thought in the Apostle's mind makes him exult with the greatest exultation that ever shook a human bosom, and prompts him to what is perhaps the most glorious utterance that has come from human lip or pen. If this yearning for some high blessedness be according to the will of God, then of the blessedness itself we may be sure. God is not deceived. God is not moved by unsubstantial dreams. That must be a reality which has set the breast of God on fire. Then all things are existing for this blessedness. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Predestination must lead to Justification, Justification must lead to Glorification. God is for us; who can be against us? He freely gave up his Son for us; shall He not freely give the rest? Are we sinful and condemned? It is God that has wiped away our sin through the death of Christ. A love like this—predestinating us, working for us, dying for us—shall anything tear us from it? No; let the sword of persecution flash—let famine and sorrow beset us—we are more than conquerors through Him! He will save us to the end. He loves us—that is enough. "I am per-

suaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

Such is the attitude of mind and heart in respect to the future which the Gospel has made possible to us.

To-day there are men walking the earth, who, when they lift their eyes to the same future, can see through the gloom only the black tops of the gate of death. And to these same eyes, often disquieted with that ghostly view, might be revealed high up the sides of the heavenly city. The life they now live in the flesh might be a long dream of the glory that shall be revealed. But, alas, they are weak, and either they know it not, or they know not how to be strengthened. And so the great Love of God is a name, and the great life in God is a baseless superstition. And so the splendid vision of that continuing city sleeps in the high distance unguessed by them. The sunlight of God makes it to sparkle and glow, till it shines like a city built of precious stones. They see it not; their gaze is downward; where their treasure is, there their heart is also. And the long string of patriarchs goes by—patriarchs confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and that they seek the city whose Maker is God—they, and the host of those who follow in their steps, and murmur their strange canticle. But the children of this world give small heed. And all the while over and around them, with a love that nothing can drain, and a patience that nothing can tire, the great Spirit yearns on, ready to lift them into his glory, and waiting but the word that will permit their salvation.

"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

The Indulgence of Self-will.—The gradual deterioration of the human heart is a fearful thing to contemplate. It is awful to think what a man may at last come to by nursing desire, and revolving round the centre of himself. People say, "Yes, there are a great many bad men loose about the world;" but they do not consider that there is a real danger that they themselves may become bad.

Let me tell you, some get bad faster than others do. They may have less moral strength, or less knowledge of truth, or less social restraint, or less favourable circumstance; but the parliamentary train reaches its destination just as surely as the express. A life of selfishness may be faster or slower, but it is all on—on—on—down—down—down. There is no stopping it but by the grace of God. Our selfishness needs only indulgence to bind us as Mazeppa was bound on his horse, and we shall be carried away by our own wild wills to all that is dark and terrible—to that waste drear land where never sun shines or flower blooms, and where the hungry wolf of despair glares out of the gloom with its red eyes.

Resist!—resist! Do not suffer yourselves to be bound!

"*Not my will, but thine be done.*"—When the musician sits down to play at the piano, one of the notes says, "I have no objection whatever to this man—in fact, I rather like him. But at the same time I should prefer to sound on my own account, and how and when I wish. I don't want to hurt him, but I want to be my own master." But the musician is sadly put out, for the note keeps sounding out of all harmony with his playing, and, beside this, his playing is deficient without its aid.

Men say: We are not enemies of God; we like the thought of God. We do not want to rebel against Him,

but we want to live on our own account, and according to our own desires.

Now, the whole universe is a great key-board, from which God wants to make the eternal harmony. And every creature is a note He cannot do without. If that note is not moved by his will, it will sound in dissonance with all the rest, and the great music will be incomplete without it. The man who is living for himself will be miserable, and will help to make others miserable.

Come up to-night to the terrible mountain-top of this truth, and listen to the world below you. Hearken to its wild discord. Hear the laughter and the weeping, the blessing and the cursing. Hear the din of prayers and tears and groans and sighs and shrieks that go trampling up the pathways of the air! Hear the sound of that world whose sound should be one stately hymn flowing up the eternal vault from under the hands of Love, and mingling with the music of the spheres. Listen to the anguish and the terror, and you have learnt what a thing it is for individual wills to exist apart from that one universal Will which proceeds from the heart of God.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."—MATT. vi. 9–13.

How to use prayer—with what requests to approach God—these were great questions for the heart of man.

Apart from revelation, prayer was considered as a means for securing personal and selfish advantages. Each tribe of savages expected that all the strength of heaven should be used on its behalf. Even among the Greeks and Romans—nay, even among the Jews themselves—prayer was only employed for selfish plans and interests. Two armies faced each other, and each looked to heaven to make it the victor.

For as yet men had not past beyond the selfish theory of existence. The idea of solidarity was in the future. The idea of the universe as a great whole of which each individual is but a very small part, and to which as a whole the interests of all the parts must subserve, was yet too large for the point of development which the human mind had reached. And since men lived for narrow and selfish ends, they prayed for narrow and selfish ends.

Into such a world came forth the Lord Jesus with the princely breadth of his teaching. Little wonder that the disciples in the atmosphere of his presence felt how cramped and miserable were their methods

of prayer. Little wonder there was drawn from them the request, "Lord, teach us to pray!"

His lesson was wondrously new.

Note the construction of the prayer He taught them. It has three parts.

First, the invocation: "Our Father which art in heaven."

Second, three petitions: "Hallowed be thy name—Thy kingdom come—Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Third, three, or as some divide them, four petitions: "Give us this day our daily bread—And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors—And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The remaining words which usually appear in the prayer we most of us know do not really belong to it.

Forgetting now for the moment what we have called the first part of the prayer—the invocation—we have the Lord's prayer before us consisting of two chief parts.

The first of these, with its three separate petitions, concerns God. There is nothing present to the mind but the thought of God and his glory and his kingdom. Let his name be hallowed, let his kingdom come, let his will be done.

In the next part the creature comes into view. Its wants are to be supplied, its sins are to be forgiven, and it is to be delivered from all that is not God.

From this structure of the universal prayer let us learn two great lessons.

1. *Let us learn that the chief concern of every creature is the glory of God and the good of his universe.* "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." In our heart of hearts the first interests in life are to be love and truth. We are to think of them first—we are

to pray for them first. That which is most of all to stir the pulse, and quicken the soul, and drink up the aspiration, is to be the kingdom of righteousness.

For God is at present shut out from his world by the selfishness of men. His absence is the cause of all sin and sorrow. There is no evil that stalks the earth but would perish at the coming of God, as towers of shadow perish at the coming of the sun. And therefore all charity, all patriotism, all benevolence, all those noblest impulses which move the hearts of good men toward their fellows—all have but one end, to get God again into his world, to secure that his will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Moreover, the throning of God in his world is the chief personal interest of each individual. The time-long blunder has been that we best take care of ourselves by—taking care of ourselves. The time-long blunder has been that we best advance our interests by—advancing them. Each seeks first his own.

In Holland it is not uncommon for a leak to open in the dykes which protect the country from the inflowing sea. Suppose such a leak to be discovered, and the cry goes forth to all the men of the district that they come quickly to mend the mischief. But each turns to his own house—each is anxious to save his own household stuff; and while they are busy over their separate interests, the strong sea makes good its entrance, and whelms them all in a common destruction.

Your want to-day, *your* pain to-day, that which to-day presses your heart and darkens your life—whence comes it? It comes in some way from evil—from evil in your own heart, or evil in the world around you. To the existence of evil shall be due all glooms and sorrows and calamities that will yet crowd your future way. Is not the extinction of evil,

then, your interest? Is it not your very chiefest interest? On the mere ground of taking care of yourself, your first business is to bring in the kingdom of God, and to have his will done in earth as it is in heaven.

No rest, no fulness, no perfection for any one of us except in the kingdom of God. Outside that kingdom all pleasure, all success, must melt at last into disappointment and despair. And because this is so—because the spread of the kingdom of God is the first concern of each of us and of all the world—does our Saviour teach us to make it the first burden of our prayer.

2. *We learn also that in subjection to the universal good, personal concerns are fitting subjects for prayer.* God has made us individuals. As individuals, we are cut off from other individuals and from the world around us. But we are connected with all these in a thousand ways, and we are at all points dependent on them. Certain needs are implanted within us, and it is no matter of choice with us whether those needs shall be satisfied. They *must* be satisfied, or pain and death lay hold on us.

This being so, we have, by virtue of our creation, a claim upon the Creator! and the Lord's Prayer recognises that claim, and teaches us to assert it. We have a right to ask for the satisfaction of our wants, and for all needed help, both temporally and spiritually. Every want we feel is a fresh bond that fastens us to the heart of God.

Beside all this, we are by our very nature exposed to many dangers and distresses. Stern sickness invades our bodies: God is responsible for that. The dear beings of our life step from our sides out into the mists of death: God is responsible for that. We find ourselves in existence, poor sinful beings, tangled

in an evil state, and this by no choice of our own: and God is responsible for that. The heavens have opened *to tell* us that He holds Himself responsible. The heavens have opened to destroy the lie that He is not implicated in our condition, and that He is careless of it. To Him, the Creator of us and our lives, we are to appeal in all our necessities and distresses.

O unspeakable comfort! we are to tell out everything to God. Let no man close that golden door of prayer by which we go in continually to the bosom of our Father. In every perplexity, in every heart-sickness, in every sorrow, we have free access to Him.

But while we rejoice in the recognition of our personal needs, which we find in the second part of the Lord's prayer, let us not forget what we have already asked in the first part. For having offered the petitions in the first part, we can only offer the petitions in the second part in subjection to them. Having asked, "Let thy kingdom come," we can only ask, "Give me my daily bread" in subjection to that. For oftentimes the personal petition cannot be answered if the universal petition is to be answered. And in all cases the universal must stand, and the personal must give way.

You are taught to pray for God's kingdom in the first place, and in the second place for yourself. The prayer for God's kingdom is *absolute*, and that must stand, whatever else must fall. The prayer for yourself is *dependent*, and you are only to expect an answer as the interests of God's kingdom may allow; in other words, in accordance with the will of God. Having prayed for the kingdom, you can ask for nothing that would be against the kingdom.

A traveller in a wild and mountainous region says to his guide, "Lead me to yonder city by the shortest road!" Soon after he sees a lovely valley, and

he asks the guide if they may not take their way through that valley. But the guide understands him perfectly. This request is dependent on the former. He only asks to be led by that valley, if the valley be one of the nearest ways to his destination.

So Jesus in view of death. The absolute prayer of his life was, "Thy will be done!" Now arose the personal cry, "Let this cup pass from me!" But in a moment the personal desire is made dependent. The cup is only to pass if thus the will of God may be done.

O our life is full of just this. Every day the personal need and the universal arise together before us. We with our trembling hands have scarcely strength to adjust them aright. But God does it for us; and God's doing it, more than anything else, makes the mystery of this mortal life. We do not understand his ways.

A young man starts in the world with good prospects. He is brought to God, and he yields himself in true consecration. He prays that the kingdom may come, and that God will use him to bring it. Then he starts in business, and he marries. All is bright before him — domestic happiness and glad success. But a few months go by, and he begins to come home at night with a saddened brow. His expectations in business are failing. Soon his beloved wife is touched by a slow disease. Evening after evening he brings home his care-weighted heart, and he meets only the sight of her lingering pain; and the man does not understand it. Sometimes he clenches his hands and groans, "Is there a God at all!" Then, horror-struck with himself, he falls before God in an agony of strong prayer. But time goes on; and now his business has failed, and his wife is dead, and he goes out upon the world a lonely and desolate

man. And years still go on—many, many years; and now his locks are thin and grey, and the hand of age is upon him. And at last he begins to understand. "Yes," he says, "I was hot and feverish; I wanted proud success; I wanted domestic joy; I was seeking those things first, and not the kingdom of God. And God has taken all from me, but He has given me Himself." Then in the summer evening he walks out to the graveyard, and finds the grave of his wife. The stone is green with moss and yellow with lichen. The old man sits down upon it, with the evening sunbeams slanting on him, and he thanks God for all. Ay, on the spot where years before his life seemed to go out in darkness, he thanks God for all. He had asked for the kingdom, and God had given him the kingdom; he had asked for the kingdom and God had not mocked him with only earthly joy.

How much that is strange, how much that is terrible in our earthly life, will yet be unriddled in this very light. Good men have cried for daily bread, and they have perished in hunger. Good men have cried, "Lead us not into temptation," and God has plunged them into the thick of it. Good men have cried, "Spare that precious life!" and even at the moment death has entered at the door.

The prayers for God and his kingdom are absolute, and they *shall* be answered: the prayers for ourselves are only dependent.

THE TRUE ALMSGIVING

" But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you."—LUKE xi. 41.

OUR English translation here has neither logic nor meaning. We expect, from the verses preceding, that our Lord is going to speak further of the heart within as contrasted with the life without. And this very thing He does, but that some unaccountable blunder of our translators has concealed it from us. The true reading of the original is this, " Give alms of the things within."

Think now of the world as it was seen by the Pharisee. He beheld it cursed with a great poverty. On every hand there were men and women who found it difficult to supply their animal wants, and to him it seemed one of the chief acts of righteousness, that he, from his abundance, should give to their necessities. Alms, therefore, he gave, and often with large-handed liberality. And having done this, he rested in a double mistake—he thought himself a righteous man because of the act, and he thought the best thing possible had been done for the creatures whom he had helped. A double mistake, I say, and yet springing from the one source—entire ignorance of the true dignity of human nature.

Through the same world Jesus moved, and on the same poverty Jesus gazed. But far from rivalling the active charity of the Pharisee, He did not even attempt it. Yet who can believe that the great human Brother was indifferent to the sunken eye, and the wan cheek, and the physical pangs of want?

He, too, beheld the poverty, and was moved by it; but He also beheld another and a greater poverty, of which the Pharisee saw nothing. To Him the prime misery of men was the famine of truth and love and joy and peace. They were without God, and of course they were unhappy. They were without God, and all other hungers filled had left the eternal hunger still gnawing within them. That the body without was worn and wretched seemed a small thing to the Eye which saw the soul within worn and wretched too, and threatened with eternal death. To lack bread was little when they also lacked God.

This spiritual famine must be relieved by spiritual alms—by giving of "the things within." No assuagement of physical wants will avail to make men what they should be. But every good man has a store within himself, wherefrom he may feed the immortal hunger of the world. There is a gold more precious than the gold of Ophir, and the shining bars may be carried forth in the face of the sun, till all grow rich with the distribution.

To give "alms of the things within" is to deny oneself. He only can be a spiritual almsgiver who has entered into the life of sacrifice.

The world is perishing for the lack of truth, and who can supply its need but the man of humility and self-abasement? The proud man—the wise and the prudent man, has not seen the truth of God. The great curtain which screens the secret things is only lifted to the poor in spirit. For the secret of the universe is humble love. And this man, grown rich through the loss of himself, is ready to turn toward the starving world with the food it needs. He gives alms of the things within. And yet the world knows him not. Lies men want, and not truth. For speaking the truth they will hate him.

The world is perishing for lack of love. And the love it needs can only come from the heart which is emptied of self, and filled with God. And this strong heart stands in the midst of hungry men, giving to them out of its unfailing abundance. Yet still they love Him not. The more a man loves, the less he is loved. For love means not pampering, but faithfulness. It is the greatest mistake that the world loves its best lovers. God loves it, and it forgets, or hates Him. Fawn on it, and it will fawn on you.

The world is perishing for lack of joy. But each joy-giver must become a man of sorrows. That poor flushed and haggard joy which lives by the gleam of the lamp and the stroke of the lute, has nothing to bestow on hungry men. Such joy is not strong enough to keep itself, and it cannot keep others. But the true joy-giver is the man to whom God has become an exceeding joy. He has lost himself, and he has found God. And now from this rich union he has joy for men. He can give alms of the things within.

Behold, then, what it is to give alms. Every time you deny yourself—every time you tread down evil—every time you put back from you the glozing temptation—every time you say, "Not my will, but thine be done"—the world is richer for you! You have given an alms of the things within, and your gift cannot be lost. It cannot be but that Heaven shall see it and men shall feel it.

One result of this spiritual almsgiving, which it comes in our Lord's way to mention here, is this—that "all things are clean unto you." These Pharisees had been very busy in maintaining a ceremonial cleanliness. All occasions of uncleanness they avoided. Pots, cups, hands, were washed with wearisome particularity.

For while they made the mistake of finding their righteousness in outward things, they also made the mistake of finding their unrighteousness there. So long as their soul could be cleansed by an outward alms, it could be soiled by a dirty cup.

And so it has always been. Strange that the soul of man can so forget its true nature and dignity. Strange that this silly error of the Pharisees yet lives on to-day in the breasts of three-fourths of the earth's population. Strangest of all that it still struggles for existence in those familiar with the words of Him who called the thoughts of men from what is without to what is within.

We may gather up the chief teaching of the words under three or four thoughts.

1. *The righteousness of God is a spiritual righteousness.* It is not that the righteousness of God has no concern with outward things. It is that righteousness cannot consist in outward things. When the heart is right with God, the whole life becomes right with God as a result. But it were vain to make the life right without first beginning with the heart.

Perhaps we may not miss this truth in the degrading way of the Pharisee, but we are still missing it if we are seeking for righteousness anything less than absolute white purity of heart before the living God. We are to aim at simplicity and uprightness in the very hidden depth of our being. To do all we do, no longer for ourselves, but for Him who died for us—to be his so completely that the old heart which once beat for self, trembling with passion or yearning with desire, shall henceforth beat only for Him, yearning with his desires, and throbbing full with his great joy—this is the ideal life we have now to set before us. And however we come short of this life in

realisation, we have still to feel that nothing else is righteousness in the sight of God.

2. *The need of the world is a spiritual need.* Not that temporal needs do not exist. They do, and they must be met with love and care. But these temporal needs themselves are only results of the greater spiritual need. Had all men been full of God, they had been empty of nothing else. It is therefore weakness to lavish attention on the result, and to forget the cause.

We pity pain and sickness and poverty, while God is pitying our sin and worldliness. Would God be content to see all men living in palaces and filled with abundance? To Him it were still a starving world!

Let us see to it, each for himself, that we seek no less than the everlasting bread. *Your* need is a spiritual need. Money, honour, influence—what can they do for you? Generations have gnawed themselves sick on these stones. If you had this moment the greatest earthly good you desire, what could it do for you? Man in the image of God, could it fill you? You want love; you want the living love of the living God.

And we should accustom ourselves to judge so of others. Let everything that wears the name of *success* or *failure* be brought to this stern test. Rise above that wretched judgment-bar of this world, every decision of which shall yet be overturned. Think for the spiritual need of your fellows. Parents, think for the spiritual need of your children. Be not dazzled by the tinsels and tassels in which this world decks itself.

3. *The benefactors of the world are the spiritual benefactors.* The greatest thing any man can do for this world is to be godlike. We are accustomed to think: If I were only rich, I should do so much! and

the thought is not altogether to be condemned. But we have to rectify our estimate of what mere wealth can do to render the world better. Very little indeed. Use it freely, and you will make a host of idlers.

O ye poor, what a strength is yours! the naked strength of the God that is in you. Keep but ready and supple to his movement, and what may He not accomplish through your means! The world wants *men.* A *man* is a greater gift to the earth than a new Golconda; for a true man comes with the quiet pomp of a mighty giver to pour abroad on every hand the alms of his inner being. The true man is resistless. No irons can hold him; there is no dungeon in which he can be buried.

O that we had but confidence in ourselves thus filled with God! Out around us to-day lies that perishing world, and in order to feed it with the Bread of Life, there is nothing necessary but that each of us be yielded to the Christ. Then we shall give alms of the things within.

4. *To the pure in spirit all things are pure.* The tendency of outward righteousness is to make outward unrighteousness. The Pharisee, be he Jew of the first century, or Christian of the nineteenth, is always full of scruples and qualms.

But in the Spirit all is broad. A century ago there was a straight-lacedness about Christian conduct which is now fast passing away. And just as true spirituality spreads, will the stain which soiled a thousand things appear to have been only in the eye of the gazer. Then will God's beautiful world come forth as a bride adorned for her husband. Too often she has been flouted as a harlot prepared to lead us astray.

"Every creature of God is good." Incredible it seems that God's minister should ever have to justify

his ways in making the birds and the flowers. Incredible it seems that the sweet uses and ordinances of human life should ever have received the brand of hell. But yet there have been ears to which the laughter of the marriage feast and the noise of the wedding bells have seemed to jangle harshly with the tones of prayer and the pealing of the bells in heaven.

When God dwells in our hearts, we see Him reflected in everything outside. And when we miss Him in nature and human life, it is not that these have lost Him, but we ourselves.

5. *Jesus Himself is the great Almsgiver.* Because He Himself was his own alms. The beneficent man gives from his pocket; Jesus never gave a pound in his life. He gave Himself, and saved the world.

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

The Inner Life.—There is a poor painter whose mind is filled with the sublime ideal of a picture at which he is labouring. Up in his studio he works, forgetting all the world besides. When he comes downstairs he has little more than bread and water for his fare, and on his house and on his family are the marks of poverty. But when he ascends again to his studio, the ideal of his life seems to open its pearly gates, and he enters that paradise within whose borders all vulgar sights and sounds are forgotten. Were he always to sit downstairs, with the sharp angles of his poverty pressing in upon him, how different would his life be!

Every true Christian is an artist of the immortal. In his own heart and in the hearts of others he is labouring to realise a glorious ideal of love and righteousness. And if he is true to his high calling, the little frets and annoyances of the world will affect him but little. He can bear to be poor, he can bear to be rich. For although he may be conscious of these things during stray hours when he comes down from his great life-thought, yet he soon goes up again and forgets them. That he is poor, that he is feeble, that he is unloved, that he is unfortunate, are all comparatively small things. His life-ideal is to produce the kingdom of God, and his labour cannot be in vain in the Lord. He too shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. Is not this enough?

There is nothing can produce contentment in our hearts, contentment with such things as we have in the present life, like the high sense within us that we are living in another and a greater life. The man who has it for his life-work to chase every demon form of evil from God's wide empire, and to fill that empire with the silver shapes of light, will be little troubled by the cheapness of his fare, or the plainness of his lot, or even by the loss of pleasure and love. "One thing" he does!

The Heart of God.—The mighty law of love in the Heart of God is the solution of all enigmas which darken round the destiny of man; yet where was the heart and mind, before the appearance of the eternal Word Himself, that could stretch its hand into that Holy of Holies of the universe, and bring forth the royal truth? And even now, when by Jesus Christ the royal truth has been brought forth, when it gleams within the covers of every Bible, when pulpits have preached it and men have lived it—even now how few of us are sufficiently changed by it to comprehend it in its eternal width and grandeur! How few of us are large enough to embrace the fatherhood of God in a perfect abandonment of faith, so that even if He should slay us we would still trust Him! We are yet so weak, yet so ignorant, that in the days of our trouble we creep under some promise for shelter, and we cry: Our God, this is Thy word, Thou art pledged to save us!—instead of going right back upon the Heart which gave the promise; instead of committing ourselves to the eternal Love which cannot fail us. The promises of God for our childhood—the Heart of God for our manhood. But we are children yet; and in many a wild hour we cling to a tiny and fragmentary presentation of the eternal principle, when the principle itself would be too large for us.

The Good Old Times.—Some people accustom themselves to lament the good old times! They think that the world has seen its best days, that we have fallen on an evil age, that things must now go on from bad to worse. I wish we could have a Cook's excursion to the seventeenth century, or the sixteenth century, for the benefit of such persons. One week up there would correct their misapprehension, and they would return to the nineteenth century at the end of those seven days, right thankful that the seven days had reached an end. They would return to thank God for the nineteenth century, and to trust Him for the twentieth. They would return to form a new theory of the world, and of God's management of it; to realise that a great scheme of development is being carried on beneath the stars, and to honour the spread of truth and righteousness as much as they now dishonour it.

Need the Measure of God's Help.—Do you want to know the man whom God is most desirous to help? It is the man who needs Him most. Is there one here weary and desolate? That is the man for God. Is there one here weak and helpless? That is the man for God. Is there one here who feels himself eaten through with the cancer of sin? That is the man for God. Is there one here who has reached the pitch of self-abomination, so that he loathes himself, and feels as if all the world loathed him, and as if the great pure heavens must loathe him beyond all the rest? That is the man for God. The more you increase your misery and need, the more the great Heart of my God yearns after you.

When two trains rush into each other with the crash of an earthquake, and the carriages are tumbled and piled and broken, and the cry of the passengers goes up, everything with a heart in it in all the neighbourhood of the accident runs down to help. Then one of those eager helpers meets with a wounded passenger. "What is the matter with you?" he asks. "I have had my ankle sprained." But just beyond there lies a poor wretch with both legs broken. And the kind soul leaves the man with the sprain, that he may help the man who needs him more.

Don't think of God as more hard-hearted than a man. I tell you your need is the measure of your claim on Him, and the measure of his desire toward you. Calculate your utmost need, then multiply it into infinite love, and the result is the Heart of God.

THE OXFORD AND BRIGHTON CONVENTIONS

A paper read before the Congregational Union of England and Wales, at the Autumnal Meeting in London, 1875.[1]

In coming forward to speak on behalf of the Conventions at Oxford and Brighton, I must not be understood to pledge myself to everything that was said or done at those meetings. Whether the speakers or the meetings were faulty or faultless, is nothing to the purpose. Whether or not there were incorrect statements of truth—whether or not there were false interpretations of Scripture—whether or not there were extravagances of word and act, is nothing to the purpose. And this reservation I make, not because I myself find any grave fault with either speakers or meetings, but because very heavy charges have been made by others. Men were taught, it has been said, "that sanctification consists in folding the arms, and leaving the Holy Spirit to act—that watching and prayer are no longer needful—that there are no more difficulties or struggles or sorrows in the life of the true Christian—that there is no further room for progress—that we are sanctified the moment we imagine ourselves to be sanctified—that there is no more need of pardon, or of the daily efficacy of the blood of Christ—that there is no longer any danger, or even any possibility of sinning." Of all these charges I have only to say that they are as false as they are absurd—absurd, that is, in the hearing of those who

[1] The substance of this paper had already been delivered from the pulpit in the ordinary course of ministry.

know what the teaching really is. But if the worst of them be true in certain cases, the great question involved remains untouched; if the worst of them be true, it is still nothing to the purpose of our discussion here to-day. That which *is* to the purpose, and by which I shall stand, is this—that a truer, a more scriptural, and a more philosophical presentation of the Christian life underlies the teachings at Oxford and Brighton than is to be found, as a rule, in the Churches. And further, that this truer presentation of the Christian life has not taken its rise at Brighton or at Oxford, or within this century, or the century before; but that it has been known, more or less, to the purest spirits that have breathed in the Christian atmosphere, since first our Master prayed for the sanctification of his followers.

The first great point of teaching put forward at Oxford and Brighton was the duty of yielding the whole being unreservedly to God—of presenting the body a living sacrifice to Him. It was shown to be impossible that God should dwell in a heart where one lingering idol or rebellion is consciously retained.

And this great act of surrender was declared as a present and possible duty. Seen in the light of God's holy law, no man has in him the power to sanctify or separate himself perfectly to God; but each man has at the present moment a power which being the utmost power he can exercise, is the power for which he stands accountable. And each one *can* at the present moment exercise this will-power, be it more or less, and present himself a living sacrifice.

And having thus yielded himself as well as he is able, he is then, in relation to his own will and purpose, altogether the Lord's. To-morrow, with an increased light and power, he may make a completer offering, and the next day an offering still more complete.

But he is not yet accountable for the talent of to-morrow. Having done what he can do at the present moment, he is to rest happy in the conviction that in relation to his own will he is sanctified.

The second great head of teaching was—Trust. Sin, it was said, that is, self-will, is the only thing that has kept God out of the heart. God's presence is like the sunshine—if a man would be without it he must close it out. And just as the sunshine rushes into the darkened room the moment the shutter is removed, so God enters the soul when the last obstacle that excluded Him is gone.

And the man who has yielded himself to God has yet another act to perform. Not only must his sins be abandoned, but his unbelief must be abandoned. He must trust.

And trust means this—he must now believe that God has become God to him according to his promise and his nature. He has come out from evil and made himself separate, and now God is to be his Father and he is to be a son of the Lord Almighty. Whatever the normal relations between God and the soul are, God now enters into those relations. All this, as concerns our spiritual nature, is summed up in the promise of the Holy Spirit. And the man who yields himself to God has, at the instant of yielding, not only the right, but the duty of believing that the Holy Spirit is given to him in that fuller operation which only becomes possible when the will is quite surrendered. He is to believe that that offering of himself, which he in his own strength cannot sustain for an hour, is accepted by God, and that God will keep it by his own Almighty power. He is to trust, and this independently of feeling and consciousness, that God has begun to live in him and walk in him, that henceforth he has only, with childlike simplicity, to yield himself

to be led by the Spirit of God. The presence of that Spirit may at first be almost imperceptible, but none the less will it be real and glorious; and the soul that waits in faith shall at last be filled with that reign of God which is righteousness and peace and joy.

In dealing with this truth, a different phraseology was employed. Sometimes it was said that Christ possesses the heart—sometimes the Holy Ghost. Both forms are scriptural. In the same sense believers are spoken of as the dwelling-place of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost.

This complete surrender to God, accompanied with faith in His inward and outward operation for us in all ways whatsoever, has usually taken place at some period subsequent to conversion, or the exercise of faith for the forgiveness of sins. Hence it has been called a "second conversion." I do not wait to consider how far the separation of the two is necessary. On the one hand, it may be said that it *is* necessary, inasmuch as we learn step by step to put our trust in God. And it may be said, on the other hand, that it is not necessary, but that a fuller declaration of the resources of the gospel made to the repentant sinner would enable him to trust at the same moment for forgiveness of sins, for providential care, and for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

In this high moment of complete consecration God takes his true place in the heart. For the first time self has descended from the long-usurped throne, and has left it vacant for God. And God comes. With a working as strong as it is silent, He begins to use the man for Himself.

What, now, is the state of sanctification reached? Is growth in grace superseded? Is there no room for advance beyond? Nay, the man has simply

taken the true attitude for sanctification. Progressive sanctification lies before. The distinction is here. In relation to the present state of his own will, the man is sanctified—that is, separated. With all the strength of his will he gives himself to God. He would do more if he could. But in relation to the future possibilities of his own will, and especially in relation to God's law and the universe, the man is not sanctified. He is full of ignorances and weaknesses. Old habits of sin cling to him. He is loaded with infirmities, and progressive sanctification—growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ must follow, to develop the resources of his own inner being, and to put him into the true relation with the universe and God.

Wherefore it is conceivable that a man should be perfect, that is *absolutely sincere*, before God, in relation to his own will, who should yet be abundantly imperfect when judged by God's law, or even man's law.

Nor have the ordinary means of grace become needless. He who would retain this state of sanctification, as well as he who would reach it, must watch and pray and read, and all these with increasing diligence and fervour.

Nor has the man past beyond the likelihood of failure and backsliding. The closer he walks with God, the less will the danger be, but the danger is always there. But the habit of keeping this attitude of soul grows, like all habits, till at last it becomes natural and easy. Nevertheless, it is possible to slip from this posture of surrender and trust ten times in the day, and ten times to calmly resume it on the first consciousness it is lost. The child just learning to write, with the pen placed correctly in his hand, may in the course of his lesson ten times lose the

proper attitude for writing, and ten times again resume it.

The great point is this—the soul has learnt a secret *how to stand with God.*

In this state of consecration the baptism of the Holy Ghost has become possible. Whether by this term is meant a gift of the Spirit quite different in kind from the ordinary gift enjoyed by sanctified persons, as some affirm, or, as others affirm, only this gift in a larger measure, we need not here discuss. Enough that those who enjoy the indwelling of the Spirit are those who go on to yearn for that fuller incoming—that mighty tide-wave of the love of God which shall sweep away the old landmarks of the separate life—which shall realise in them the experience of those great men of old who were "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and the promise of our Master that from the heart which believes on Him shall flow forth "rivers of living water."

Let us, then, clearly note the difference between the doctrine of sanctification taught at Oxford and Brighton and the doctrine of sanctification which is commonly taught in the Churches. The doctrine taught in the Churches is briefly this: When a man is brought to Christ, and has realised the forgiveness of sin, there commences within him a process of sanctification, which advances gradually from year to year, which is nourished by all the events and occupations of life, and which is under the presiding influence of the Holy Spirit. And he is exhorted by his teachers to wrestle with every form of evil, to watch and pray continually, and to feed his soul with the word of truth.

From this teaching the teaching of the Convention differs only in being more. It includes most absolutely all this teaching of progressive sanctification, but it

adds to it the teaching of what we have already called the attitude of sanctification. It declares that man has in himself no power to purify his heart, from which, as from a fountain, the life proceeds. It declares that the same Jesus who is made unto us righteousness is also made unto us sanctification; and that just as we came to Him at first, poor helpless sinners, to receive the forgiveness of sin, which He only could bestow, so now we may come to Him to receive power over sin, which can proceed from Him alone. It declares that what we need to set us right is to love the Lord with all our heart, and that we can only do that by the Holy Ghost which is given to those who yield themselves and trust for the blessing. And it declares that he who yields all to Christ and expects all from Christ, will, by the very law of his own nature, love Him with the chiefest love. And while he maintains this attitude of consecration (and if he slip from it, it can instantly be resumed) there is no sense of condemnation between him and his Lord.

> "Not a cloud does arise
> To darken the skies,
> Or to hide for one moment his Lord from his eyes."

Then he is in the true state for progressive sanctification.

That progressive sanctification takes place in the hearts of many believers under the ordinary teaching is quite manifest. But this other teaching is ready to affirm that such sanctification is only the slow and feeble growth which a tropical plant might attempt in the harsh airs of this northern land. It declares that there is a method by which all the influences for growth might be multiplied a thousandfold. In a word, it not only teaches progressive sanctification, but it also teaches, and emphasises with untiring

reiteration, that attitude of surrender and trust in which only progressive sanctification can truly take place.

A gardener goes forth to superintend the hirelings who keep his garden. Outside one of the glass houses he finds a row of potted plants which should have been placed within. He calls the lad to whom the duty was committed and orders their removal. For days they have stood there with scarcely any show of growth; but now they are placed under the glass and their true growth begins. In either case they might have grown, but only in the latter case could there be quick and abundant growth.

The flower carried in from the chill wind to its native temperature, feeling within itself the sensations of growth, and actually growing more in an hour than it would have grown in a week outside, is a fit emblem of the man who, having tried to advance his sanctification for years, is suddenly lifted into the experience of the great truth that Jesus is his sanctification. And this has been the uniform testimony of hundreds, if not thousands, in result of the meetings in Oxford and Brighton. "The Bible," they say, "is a new book to us. While we stand thus with God, a light from his face (a light which is surely a smile) seems to fall on the familiar page, and discover recesses of meaning we never saw before. As in a moment, we are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The sins which have mastered us for years—the sins over which we have wept and prayed in vain, lie conquered at our feet; and yet not by us, but by Him through whom we can now do all things. And the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which is given to us."

All this they testify so long as they stand thus with God, but not a moment longer. Let the will once more bend round to self-service, let the living faith

which wrought this blessed union unloose its mighty grasp, and all the Paradise of God which spread around the soul grows faint and vanishes like the vapour of a dream.

Between these two sanctifications, then, let the distinction be marked broad and clear. The attitude of sanctification represents the separation of the man to God in his own will, and the trusting in Christ as his sanctification, up to the point of exhausting all his power at the time, so that absolutely he can do no more. So far as it is possible to him he is altogether consecrated. Progressive sanctification represents that separation to God over which the man himself has immediately no control, but which is wrought by the Spirit of God in connection with an increasing knowledge of truth, and all the discipline of life. And progressive sanctification can be fully realised only by the man who is day by day and hour by hour in this attitude, in all that realm which is covered by the operation of his will. Is it possible that any man can question this?

Is it possible, then, that any man can question the essential teaching of the Conventions at Oxford and Brighton, which had for its single aim to set forth this truth, and to call men to that attitude of soul in which progressive sanctification becomes possible. As already said, we are most anxious this morning that this great teaching should be held separate from any notions of mistake or extravagance which some have associated with it. To spend ourselves in criticism on these things would be simply impertinent to the subject. What concerns us as men, and some of us especially as Christian ministers, is that underlying philosophy of the teaching which we have endeavoured to limn in faint outline. That philosophy—is it true or is it false? Is it true or is it false that a man is in the attitude for Divine

influence only when his will is surrendered to the will of God? Is it true or is it false that God calls on every man at every moment to make this surrender of himself to Him? Is it true or is it false that when he makes this surrender the Spirit of God begins to work in his heart in a way that would have been impossible before? Is it true or is it false that God is ready to be a Father to us in all that breadth of glorious meaning which is only rudely hinted in the earthly relationship? Is it true or is it false that the great heavens over us are yearning downwards with that residue of the Spirit which He has promised who came to baptise us with the Holy Ghost and with fire? These—these are the questions we have to answer.

To say nothing of the effects of this great doctrine on the Christian minister—to say nothing of that deeper insight into the Scriptures of which so many have testified—to say nothing of that increased power of self-restraint, of that self-forgetfulness, of that ethical rightness, of that shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart, of that something within which burns outward in yearning love to men, and makes the preaching of Christ the gladdest work on earth—in a word, to say nothing of that marvellous change which has lifted the man's whole life to a level of beauty and joy, which before he only reached in hours few and far between; to say nothing of all this, let us consider at least the difference of the message which he bears to his people. If he has not been reached by the truth of the Oxford and Brighton Conventions he has but little to say on the subject of sanctification, and that little is vague and undefined. Men are, of course, to wrestle with their sins, and if they can, overcome them—but of this he holds out but slender hope, if any hope at all. Yes, they are to wrestle with sin, looking for the help of God; but he is forced in candour to tell them that it will be

a long, hard battle. They may hope to improve in the use of their weapons, but as to victory and rest —as to the glad hour when they shall stand more than conquerors through Him who loved them— these are reserved for a better world, for that bright region beyond the valley of death.

But if the man has reached the truth I advocate— especially if that truth has become his own glad experience—his preaching is another thing. He has to tell his hearers of a victory over sin, and a rest and a fulness in God which can be gained and enjoyed at present in foretaste of the perfect victory and rest of heaven. Instead of pointing them vaguely to a future which is to be busy with a long, slow process of sanctification, he points them to the present hour Progressive sanctification is the work of God, wrought, indeed, with man's co-operation through all ethical activity—all minutest attention to every duty between man and God, and man and man— but still it is the work of God operating upon us with his Spirit. But they may *now* present themselves a living sacrifice to God. At the present moment they are to ask Him to search their hearts, and cleanse them from every evil way. At the present moment they are to yield themselves to Him, to live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them— at the present moment they are to trust that God becomes God to them, and they are to look to Him with confidence, not only in every temporal need but much more in every spiritual need; they are to expect, even then, that the Holy Ghost will enter the temple from which He has so long been banished, and will work in them the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power! This is his call to them, a call sharp, quick, to the point— a call which summons them to no dreamy passivity,

but to the most intense activity in the work of their sanctification, and in all the ethical rightness which flows from love to God in the heart. "To-day," he cries, "to-day—this hour, enter by faith into that union with Christ wherein is rest from carking care, and from the tyranny of sin, and from all that darkens and pollutes the soul, through the working in us of his mighty power! Enter into that life wherein we walk no more alone, but with that Saviour who has grown to us 'a living bright reality.' Enter into that life wherein, with a deeper sense than ever before of our sinfulness and feebleness, with a continual proneness to temptation and fall, with a continual sense of shortcoming and failure which drives us ever afresh to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, we yet have peace in all our borders, and go on joyfully without condemnation, because in Christ Jesus we walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Blessed are the people who hear this joyful sound—this present offer of peace and holiness by faith in Christ. And blessed shall the universal Church be when this glorious gospel is sounded in every pulpit in every land. Then shall cease the loud complaint of cold, uninteresting, and profitless ministries—of a failing supply of men who are willing to be ambassadors for Christ, and to count all loss for his name—of the great frost of worldliness binding up the liberality of professing Christians—of the slow progress of the gospel in the lands where it contends like a naked stripling with the giants of heathen superstition. Brethren, the want of the Church is that living holiness of heart which nothing will ever produce but the doctrine of union with Jesus Christ which is taught in the New Testament, and which has been rehearsed in the ears of this land by the Conventions of Oxford and Brighton.

FRAGMENTS OF DISCOURSE

The Sanctity of Flowers.—To me, the flowers are a great sacrament of God. They convey a something to us which without them we could not receive.

You bring a beautiful bouquet to a sick friend, and lay it on the table at her bedside. Her face brightens to see it, just as you knew it would. You rightly guessed that the tender faces of these poor creatures would have smiles for her sick heart. You rightly guessed that there would flow from their bosoms a light and a beauty into hers. Mixed subtly with their fragrance they would exhale a fragrance more than cup of flowers ever yielded.

To Suffer is to Give.—If we could untwist the cord of existence, and see how the spiritual good of one man may be bound up with the suffering of another, we should understand how suffering may be the very highest mode of giving.

The Idealists.—The Idealists are the kings of the ages, but the sceptre they sway is so large and long, and the eyesight of ordinary men is so short, that it would be as impossible for ordinary men to comprehend the empire of the Idealist as it would be for the naked eye to perceive the orbit of the comet. To the men around them their sceptre is almost invisible. After a few centuries the most advanced spirits begin to see it in vague and misty outline. It is only when millenniums have past that its golden top is bare, all aflame with the diamonds of truth; and then, perchance, men search up the ages in vain to learn the hand that swayed it.

And so the great king is mocked in his own time. When he waves the hand that grasps the sceptre men see the

hand and not the sceptre, and they cry, "What game is this the fool is at?"

What Faith is.—To have faith is to believe; and yet faith is not mere intellectual credence. The moral nature is engaged in it.

There is a country called America—you believe that with your intellect.

God is love—that, too, you believe with your intellect, but not with intellect alone. You cannot believe that God is love one inch farther than you yourself are love. And the reason our religious faith is so slender is often that we are not in the moral mood for a more vigorous faith. The man who is daily living the life of Christ—who is daily trying to give himself for others—will have little difficulty in resting on God as love. His heart will help his head to believe.

Live for Others.—Live for the good of the world, live in sympathy with the world. Do not turn into your snail-shell, and glue yourself to your own wall, and leave all the rest to go as it may. Live for the world, with high faith, with pure example, with self-sacrificing effort. And if you so live, you will still live on when you are dead. These are the things men cannot screw into coffins, and huddle into nameless graves. There are some men who have past away from earth, but whose living influence is deathless. As well seek to bury the wild air of heaven as to bury them, for they ride on all winds, over all lands, with an immortality of benignant power.

God with us.—Many persons think of God as of some great Being, who sits in a gilded palace away at some beautiful West End of his universe, while we in our miserable East End starve and perish. The life of Jesus Christ is the contradiction of the lie. No; He is here in our East End with us, afflicted in all our afflictions, redeeming and bearing and carrying us; transfusing all his life into us, and finding his true blessedness in helping us. For Him there can be no West End while there is an East End for one of his creatures.

The Love of Christ.—The highest realisation of religion is not in perfect virtue, or in admiration of the character of Christ, but in love. We are to love Christ.

Think what love is in the world. It is the greatest power of all. By it kingdoms have been set up, and by it kingdoms have been thrown down. It is the colour and the music of life. From even the most matter-of-fact man take away love, and he remains barren. The presence of love will brighten the darkest lot; the absence of love will darken the brightest.

The rich merchant walks down to his office in the morning twirling his gold-headed stick, and he thinks: "A fortunate woman that wife of mine! She has so many servants and carriages at her command. She has a house that is the envy of the neighbourhood, and money to her heart's content." But even at the moment he is indulging these great thoughts she is sitting in her boudoir, and her silent tears are flowing. For her life is a failure. The dream of her girlhood has melted into gloom. She wanted love. She did not want to be pampered, she wanted to be loved. She did not want beautiful carpets and rare pictures and sumptuous furniture, she wanted a heart for her own. And the man does not love her! So her life is desolate.

Look where the brother and sister are seated side by side at the hearth. He has been absent for years, and this is his first night home. The rapture of greeting is over, and she sits by her brother. She does not speak, she simply holds his hand in hers. Her brother—her dear, dear brother! The gas is not yet lighted, but you can see by the blaze of the fire that down her cheeks the tears of happiness are stealing. The hour is divine with love.

Love—what is it? Let the philosopher step forth and analyse it. He cannot. It is there, as potent as the law of gravitation, but as insusceptible of being understood or stated.

And now, can we think that this love, the strongest force on earth, has nothing to do with heaven? With our life on earth has it everything to do, and with our life in

heaven, nothing? The Bible teaches the contrary. Love is everything.

What we want is the *love* of Christ. Not admiration, but love. We want to love Him with our whole being. O what deserts our lives have been when they might have been gardens of roses! The beaming smile of Christ had made all sublime. And even now what a life is before you in his love, if only you can let go self and enter it. O the calm! O the joy! O the strength! O the fulness! And there are hours of trial and sorrow before you, which will be dreadful without the love of Christ; but with the love of Christ you can meet all, and rejoice in all. To the heart filled with Christ death is nothing. Seek, seek love. Become what you may—gain what you may—if you enter not into love your life on earth will be a failure.

Prayer.—Do not think it is all the same whether or not you pray for God's kingdom to come into this world. Do not think it is all the same whether or not you pray for spiritual blessings on your friends. Do not think it is all the same whether or not you pray for your own temporal necessities.

Some men say, "Prayer is good, for it draws us nearer to God; but things come round all the same with the prayer or without it."

This teaching is as unscriptural as it is unphilosophical. God's method is invariably *means to an end;* and where the means are not used the end will not be reached.

It would be just as sensible to say, "Yonder go the husbandmen to till the land. It is a good exercise for their health, but things would come round all the same without ploughing or sowing or reaping."

We have never reached a worthy philosophy of prayer till we see it as one of the great methods by which God shares the management of the universe with his creatures.

No man has a right not to pray. This is to abandon his vicegerency in the spiritual realm. This is to expect that God's love will do without his effort what God in the very highest love has made dependent on his effort. As well

say, "If I do not breathe, God's love will not let me die." Yes, but God's love *will* let you die.

There is no doubt that prayer is good as drawing us nearer to God.

There is no doubt that prayer is good as stimulating men to activity; for where there is a heart to pray there is always a hand to work.

But, beyond all these, there is no doubt that prayer is a spiritual force discharged from the heart of man, which mingles itself in some way beyond our ken with the great force of universe. In a word, it is the means to the end.

No Rain, no Flowers.—There are two gardens side by side, and one of the gardens prays that it may never be shaken by winds or drenched by rains—that it may have perennial sunshine; and the skies grant its prayer.

Then in the late summer a youth comes along the road, and he remembers that he is near the gardens. He says, "I shall pluck a nosegay for mother." But when he comes to the foolish garden he looks over the fence in dismay. "What has been here?" he exclaims. "Everything is burnt up by the roots!" Then he goes on to the next garden, and already the odour of the flowers is wafted to meet him. He climbs the fence, and gathers a sweet nosegay, and carries it home to his mother.

When God comes to gather flowers from the heart of man He will find but little where there has been only sunshine; He will pluck his choicest where most the rains of sorrow have fallen, and the winds of sorrow have blown.

Dissipations.—Whenever I find that the varying dissipations, in which irreligious men seek their amusement, are helpful to Christian growth and peace, I shall begin to cultivate prize roses in my cellar.

"*The Lord God is a Sun.*"—There shines the sun, always giving, never receiving. The light of the sun is enough for all—no one ever thinks of its not being enough, except some philosopher who tells us that after a few millions of billions of ages it will go out. What a fool we should think the man who would say to himself on rising

in the morning, "Well now, there will be so many eyes taking in the sunlight to-day, I fear there will not be enough for me." God is a Sun; He is enough and to spare.

"Enough for each, enough for all,
Enough for evermore."

Think too how free is the sunlight. The sun does not send in a bill for his light. When his light is withdrawn, and we have to depend on the gas companies, immediately there rises the question of payment. But the sun makes no charge for the light he pours down in abundance. The Lord God is a Sun. To say that the storehouses of his grace are open that all may go in and take his richest treasures, is only a cold way of putting it. He *presses* his gifts and his love upon us. He stands at the door and knocks.

Think of the difficulty there is in this world in escaping from the light of the sun. A man must go into a cave or a dungeon, or fence himself with shutters and bars, if he would be without it; and even then, if he leave one unguarded cranny or chink, in streams the irrepressible light. If you would be without God and his love, you must build Him out.

O what would the world be without the sun!—*that* you are without God. I am loath to-night to let you go back to that sunless heart, and that sunless house, and that sunless life, and that sunless hereafter!

Worldliness and Asceticism.—Men have made two mistakes about the world. They have lived for the creation, and forgotten the Creator—this is worldliness. And they have lived for the Creator, and forgotten the creation—this is asceticism. But we are to live for the Creator and the creation together, and in their true relations.

A wife gives little attention to her husband, and lives for her children and household. Or she thinks only of her husband, and in her fond doating on him she sits moping all day long, and neglects the rest. Or she loves her husband, and for his sake she loves the children all the more, and attends to the household all the better.

If God fills our heart, He will fill the world too, and all things shall be bright with love. He who truly loves need be no ascetic. It is no harm to be happy in love. The true wife has pleasure in her fair home when it is filled with the light of her husband's presence. But when he is gone across the seas, the light is gone too. She wanders like a ghost through her beautiful rooms. The pleasant furniture and the gay gardens might as well not be there. *He* is away.

And it is permitted to you to be sad in the world and weary of it when your Lord is gone from you. But when He is with you it is impious to be sad. Enjoy all!—only be sure that you enjoy all in Him, and that you enjoy Him more than all. The moon does no harm in the sky when the sun is also there. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."

The Dew of Youth.—If a man lives only for the world, the higher part of his nature, his sentiments and affections, shrivel up and decay. In worldly persons you do not see the freshness and delicacy of the feelings last. The tender bloom dies away with advancing years. But did God intend that the best part of us should wither first? Did He intend the romance of life to fade off as we leave behind us the country of youth? Did He intend that all poets should dirge the irrecoverable sweetness of the past?

No; our way is onward and upward for ever. All this happens because we live unnaturally. God made us for love, and only the love of Christ can keep the heart fresh and dewy, and advance it to ever-increasing health and beauty. You never see a man with the love of Christ in him become hard and shrivelled in old age.

The Care of God.—Suppose you had the power to create a living thing, a bird or an insect, you would be careful not to put in it a want you could not satisfy. You would be careful in forming it that never afterwards it would cry out for a something you could not give.

And has God been careless in this matter? See his

cattle on his hills, or his fishes in his sea, their wants and desires matched with an abundant supply. And has He made us, his noblest creatures, that we may go on for ever filling the air with the cry of our hunger? I say *no!* There is a provision in God for every want in every human being, and although this world has broken loose from Him, and is a scene of confusion and disorder, "each seeking his own," still God is reaching down his hand filled with the supplies we crave. You may not *see* it through the strife and turmoil, but we owe it to God's love to believe it.

You need forgiveness, you need strength, you need purity, you need wisdom, and you need many temporal things besides. Look up to your heavenly Father with expectant trust. That you might look to Him—that you might learn to hang on Him—He made you thus dependent. There is in Him the supply of every temporal and eternal need. And if there be some want for which the Bible has no promise, then—God is love! That is the supplement and complement.

It is a historical fact that Jesus Christ was the first to tell the world of such a God.

Asking in Jesus' Name.—When we read, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," the words do not reach us with the exact sense they brought to the disciples. Only in the same hour they had heard for the first time that they *might* ask all things in the name of Jesus. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name," was only a statement of fact; to us it comes with a burden of reproach for duty and privilege neglected.

The passage stands like a great pillar with two faces. One face looks back upon the past with the gentle reproach; the other commands the future with the glorious invitation and promise: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

You have read the words a hundred times, but do you yet understand that it is really permitted you to ask everything in the name of Jesus? How much have you asked in his name? How full has been your joy?

In the same Church there are a good man who has fallen into pecuniary distress and a good man a rich merchant. And the merchant writes to his fellow-member, enclosing some present help, and desiring him in his further need to apply to him. The other gives no attention to the letter, which gets buried among his papers. Thus days go on; his case has not mended; his furniture is partly sold; destitution is at the door. Turning over her husband's desk, the wife lights on the merchant's letter. "Have you gone to him?" she asks. No, he has not—he has not understood that he might; even yet he will not understand. At last he is persuaded by his wife, and goes. He tells the other all his need. And that other gently chides him. Why has he not trusted him? Hitherto he has not ventured on his promise. But let him only ask in any future need, and he shall receive.

And that day there is fulness of joy in the lately desolate house. This day may there be fulness of joy in your hitherto desolate heart!

Freeness of the Spirit.—Our theory of the world is this, that everything has existence for the sake of the spiritual result in man. In that everything finds its final cause. And to suppose that when men are at last brought to cry out for the Spirit, the Spirit will not be granted, is to suppose that under an intelligent Manager the whole scheme of things is being wrought for a certain result, and that when the result just begins to be possible the work is abandoned.

I go into a porcelain manufactory, and pass through the rooms where the different processes take place, till I reach the room where the china is ready to be painted before its last glazing and baking. But there I hear that the proprietor keeps the pigments locked up, and will allow the work to advance no further. What would men say? They would say: This man is mad; he is wasting his capital; the lord chancellor must interfere on behalf of his family! And yet while we feel it impossible that a man like ourselves should so stultify himself, we think God might do it.

Be assured that when we begin to cry out for the Spirit,

God has brought us to the very point toward which He has laboured to bring us. Take another illustration.

A child offends its mother in the morning of the day. The mother declares that it must not speak to her till it has first sought forgiveness. Dinner-time comes, but the little rebel will not submit. But how the mother longs for that submission! Tea-time comes, and still no sign of bending. And the mother is using all kinds of little innocent dodgings and back-stairs influence to bring about the repentance. But still in vain. At last bed-time comes. And the child draws near with the rosy lips pouted for the kiss of forgiveness. Will that mother refuse it? Will that mother refuse what she has all day long yearned for, and laboured to produce? As much, says Christ, will your Father in heaven refuse the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him!

The Water of Life.—Happiness does not consist in *having*, or in *doing*, but in *being*. It is what you *are* makes you happy. Jesus does not say there is *no* happiness in other ways, but He says you will "thirst again." And the water that is to be in you, a well of water, is the water He will give you. Nothing else satisfies.

God with us.—God does not sit in the cage of his own laws, shut up from direct communion with his creatures, and only feeding them with honey on the end of his staff. No—He comes down with his warm presence into our lives and feeds us with his *hand*.

Unpreparedness.—The unpreparedness of hearts is the great reason why God's kingdom does not spread faster. The sun is the centre of the solar system, and from him the planets derive their light and heat. But if there were no atmosphere about our earth, the sun might send forth light and heat in vain. It is the atmosphere which receives the beams of the sun, and diffuses them, and makes them serviceable. And there must be a certain atmosphere around human hearts before they can receive the light and heat of God—before they can be any the better for his love shining down on them.

Mysteries.—I have a friend who is an intellectual sceptic, and his reason for rejecting Christianity is that it is full of mysteries. For himself he will not believe anything he cannot understand. Not in any nook of the universe will he allow a curtain to hang. All must be clear. Well, I call on him one day and argue with him till I find I was a fool to begin, and I rise to go. On our way downstairs we stop at his conservatory. He calls me to admire a fine azalea.

"You made this?" I say.

"Made it?" he asks, with astonishment.

"How does it come here then?"

"It grows," he answers, scanning me as if I were going mad.

"But how does it grow?"

"That I cannot tell."

"Ah—a mystery, I suppose," I say, mischievously.

And indeed it is true that these men expect Christianity, which is a statement of the truths of our highest being, to be free from the mysteries they find in the grass under their feet.

Love to Christ.—What is love to Christ? Many persons make the mistake of supposing that love to Christ is a sort of high ecstatic state of mind, altogether above the reach of human feelings. But this is not the case. It means simply *inclination.*

If I hold in one hand a balloon filled with gas, and in the other hand a ball of lead, and then open both my hands, the ball will fall to the ground and the balloon will mount into the air. The inclination of the one is downwards, and the inclination of the other is upwards; but neither can follow its inclination while my hand is holding it. Then if I tie the balloon with a piece of string, it will mount as far as the string permits. Then if I cut the string, it will spring aloft till the roof intercepts it. All the time its *inclination* is to ascend into the sky, and by no fault of its own does it not ascend.

It is the inclination of many men to be yielded altogether to Christ, who yet feel that in actual service they are not altogether yielded. They are prevented by sur-

rounding influences from being what they would be. But in the depth of their hearts they cry, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And were they only free they would mount—mount up into his presence.

I do not ask, What is your achievement? I ask, What is your inclination? What would you be if you could?

The Ministry of Sorrow.—What is a man worth without submission? and what gives submission like sorrow? What is a man worth without patience? and what gives patience like sorrow? What is a man worth without trust? and what gives trust like sorrow? If you are going into sorrow, you are entering a garden where around you on all sides are trees laden with the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." To gain these fruits it is worth while to have trouble. Sorrow discovers to a man a new life in himself. He finds it is possible to be happy without health—to be happy without wealth—to be happy without any earthly good. He finds there is a serene life in God which furnishes its own health, its own wealth, its own good. He finds there are treasures in heaven from which he cannot be divided. Of all this—of the glorious possibilities of the inner life—he knew but little, till pale stern sorrow beckoned him apart from the merry crowd, and lifted the eternal curtain.

"*Hath never Forgiveness.*"—Forgiveness means taking a person right back to your heart—reinstating him altogether in admiration and honour and trust. And this can only be done on the repentance of the transgressor. Without that repentance he may still be *loved*—loved with a Divine compassionate yearning, but he cannot be forgiven. And therefore is it that a heart which has become insensible "hath never forgiveness." It has lost the capacity to perceive goodness, and thus it cannot hate badness.

Have you ever seen a wood scathed and blasted by fire—all the tender possibilities of green trees and grass and flowers gone, and gone for ever? Where the birds sang

and the butterflies loved to drowse, there is now but a waste of blackened ashes. Let the sweet spring come up with all her panting heaving life, but she will not be felt *there*.

May not a man come to that insensibility of goodness and truth and beauty, that he *cannot ask* forgiveness?

God's love of us.—There are many persons who arise in the morning and look into their hearts to see if God is loving them. If they feel happy they think He loves them, and they are content. If they feel unhappy—if the soul is clouded from any cause whatever—they think the love of God toward them has ceased. They believe the state of their own heart decides the state of God's heart. I should as soon think of looking at my watch to see if the sun were in the sky! No man has confidence in the sun till he believes it acts independent of his watch. No man believes in the love of God till he believes that no possible change in him can affect the infinite Heart!

Complete in Christ.—There is an old man travelling along a road to reach a certain town before nightfall. He is feeble, and footsore, and weary. Now a gentleman driving past in his carriage kindly takes up the traveller, and he finds himself borne along without effort. He is not any less feeble, not any less footsore, not any less weary, but none of those weaknesses now hinder his progress. On he goes with the speed of two strong horses.

It is so with the man whom Christ has lifted into his great salvation. Does he find himself any purer? No! Is he stronger in himself? No! Is he anything he was not before, when out on the dark road he strove to stumble on? No! He is absolutely nothing in himself. All he is, he is by virtue of his union with Christ. He is in Christ, and Christ is in him. It is the strength of Christ you see in him, and not his own strength.

For many persons expect that when they become Christians *they* shall become pure, *they* shall become strong. They expect they shall become lovely in themselves. They expect that a time shall come when they shall look at themselves, as a beautiful girl might look at herself in

the glass, and say: How fair I am! But they go on to learn more. They go on to throw away such hopes, and to hate them. They go on to see that God has provided a better thing for them in giving them his wondrous Christ, in whom they are for ever complete.

Study of the Bible.—The more men know of the Bible, the more they will believe in it, and the more they will love it. We are not afraid of men becoming students of the Bible. What we are afraid of is that men will judge it standing too far off.

I have looked at the Alps from the northern plains of Italy. They show at times like a faint outline of cloud against the sky. One could little wonder if a man who had read of the Alps should say, "What! yonder the Alps! I cannot believe it." But when you get him up among the mountains, there is no longer any doubt. He beholds them shooting their white and shattered tops into the sky. He beholds the wonders of the Rosa and Matterhorn. These, he feels, are the Alps.

And, again, men who do come near to the Bible come too often as critics with their microscopic examinations. Just as if a man should come to see the Alps with a microscope!

I cannot doubt for a moment that every honest mind will be convinced by the study of the Bible that it is the book of God. To him who patiently and devoutly regards it, it ceases to be a book, in any ordinary sense. It becomes a living thing, instinct with the very spirit of Him who gave it, and who still speaks through it.

The Vanity of Sin.—A little boy takes a rose which he has just plucked from a bush in the garden, and plants it in a pot with earth, and brings it to his father, saying, "Father, look at my rose!" The father pities the boy's delight, for he knows the flower must soon wither away for want of root. And so the great Father in heaven looks down at the plans we make without Him, and He knows they must shortly wither and die. Nothing can succeed but that which is rooted in God.

The Symbols of the World.—Have you ever thought how much our knowledge of spiritual things depends on the natural objects by which we are surrounded? Without these it had been impossible for God to reveal Himself to man. Christ says, "I am the good Shepherd!" but if there had not been sheep and shepherds first, the words would have conveyed no truth to his hearers. How should we know what He meant when He said, "I am the Bread," were it not that we have had bread to nourish our natural bodies, and so can conceive of a spiritual need and its supply? Then God tells us He is our Father, but unless we knew the earthly relationship, the truth which thus reaches us could never have reached us at all. And when we are told the "Lord God is a sun," if there were no natural sun we could not tell what is meant.

Now all this seems to me very beautiful, and infinitely more beautiful when I put it in this way: God did not come down into the world, and look around Him for ready-made objects by which to teach us, saying, "What shall I find to convey this or that truth? No; God framed the world in harmony with the truths He wanted to convey to men. And yet not even for this end as a reason; but the world as it came out from the thought of God was like God's other thoughts; so that quite naturally the things in the material sphere matched with and represented the things in the spiritual sphere. I am sure that birds, and animals, and rolling waves, and sliding clouds, and beaming stars, all have spiritual meaning and analogies.

The Light Affliction.—When a sack of wheat is brought to the miller, I suppose the thought of each grain, if it could think, would be that it had a good deal better be left whole. But the miller does not think so. He intends that each grain shall be ground, in order that it may serve a higher purpose than it could serve by remaining whole. He intends that it shall become bread.

God is a great miller, and He grinds human hearts. He grinds them, and He *means* them to suffer, and it is all in love. He has a high destiny for us, and to reach that destiny we must be ground. He has a high end for this universe of which we form a part, and right to that end He

is bearing it on. But we, instead of falling in with God's great design, or even apprehending it, are engrossed each with his own little concerns. We are like shell-fish, living each in his own shell, and God's great aim is to get us out of it. What wonder we mistake the uses of suffering, and the purpose of God, and the destiny of ourselves and all things!

Have you ever reckoned how many times a day you think of yourself? What would it be to live a whole day, and never become the object of your own thoughts! It would be heaven—for as surely as you were done with yourself, would you be busy with God. God wishes you to live in Him, thinking no more of yourself than if you did not exist.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost.—Why is it we have not more frequent baptisms of the Holy Ghost?

As well ask why a field does not thrive which is roofed in from sun and rain. Are you living—is the Church at large living in such a way that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is possible?

If I want to find acorns I do not go to seek them in the streets—I go abroad into the oak forest, where every wind that blows tosses them in abundance about my feet.

We are walking in ways of self-pleasing and worldliness on which the Holy Ghost never did and never can descend.

If you seek Him with the whole heart He will be found of you.

Imitation of Christ.—"Not I, but Christ—not I, but Christ!" Go on to fill these words with deeper and with ever deeper meaning. While you gaze at Christ, and make his great righteousness yours, you have your eyes on the loveliest picture of moral excellence which even heaven can afford to you. While you look at yourself, and endeavour to produce a righteousness of your own, you have your eyes on—what? Well, your own heart, whatever that may be.

A young sculptor devotes himself to study for his perfection in Art. But instead of going to the great masters he surrounds himself in his studio with his own works—

his own heads, his own busts, his own figures. He studies himself.

The man who has no thought beyond producing a righteousness out from himself is like this artist. Forget yourself! "Not I, but Christ!"

Christians too Large for Churches.—You meet a soldier in the street.

"You are a Ninety-second Highlander?" you ask.

"No," he says, "I am not—I am a man. I *belong* to the Ninety-second Highlanders—if that's what you mean."

You ask of your friend—

"You are a Presbyterian?"

"No," he says, "I am not—I am a Christian. I *belong* to the Presbyterians—if that's what you mean."

There are men around us to-day, and you might as well try to get them into a pill-box as to get them into any Church under the sun. They have grown beyond it.

See yonder eagle sailing among the clouds! Once it was shut up in a shell, but it has grown beyond that. You can never get it into a shell again.

The Poor Angels.—The poor angels in heaven have no money in the bank, and no theatres or novels. They have only God for their "exceeding joy." What a stupid life for many of us!

Life in God.—Look at the lark in his nest on the ground, surrounded by high grass; and of the world outside how little does he behold. But when he spreads his wings and soars aloft, what a glorious prospect is his. The earth, and all it contains, is spread beneath his feet.

In like manner must we rise out of the low life of business and care and worry, and live out—out—out into the infinite of God. How small appears the concern which an hour before chilled the heart and damped the hope!

Enthusiasm and Fanaticism.—Be an enthusiast in religion. In worldly things the man is nothing who is not an enthusiast. What is the painter without enthusiasm? What is the soldier without enthusiasm? I meet men

starting in business, and I know they will succeed because they are enthusiasts. Be an enthusiast in your Christian discipleship, or you will be nothing.

Distinguish between fanaticism and enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is strong; fanaticism is weak. The enthusiast is a man on fire whose reason is sitting aloft in high control; the fanatic is a man on fire whose reason has taken fire with the rest, and who has nothing to control him. And on this account the enthusiast is calm, deep, strong, silent, intense; while the fanatic rolls like a wild and boisterous wave of the sea.

Jesus Christ was an enthusiast, but He was no fanatic.

Humility.—Avoid speaking of yourself. Some persons think themselves better worth talking of than anything else. They *bore* you by the half-hour with trifles concerning them, which seem to them of the chiefest importance. These are the persons who *feel* only what touches their own skin; sorrow next door is a very trivial business, but when sorrow knocks at their own door—the universe is falling.

Be humble!

You ask if one has not to give up a great deal when one becomes humble. No!—you gain everything. For a proud man to enter into humility is like as if a man living close to a palace, and having but a very small garden of his own, should receive invitation from the king to walk in *his* garden. He exchanges his small enclosure for the width and beauty of a royal domain—the narrowness and wretchedness of the life in self for the glory of the life in God.

Be humble!

Do not seek to get to the mountain top. There it is windy and bleak, and the snow lies in barren drifts; and on the summit is room only for a few. Down in the valley there is plenty of room, and the ground is carpeted with soft green moss. There are the bowers where your Saviour sat when He trod the earth. And you will find for your society the good and pure of all the ages!

Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy.—Our Lord's opinion of the

Samaritans was that they knew not what they worshipped. Yet He chose a Samaritan for the hero of a tale. Heterodoxy with love!

And look on the Priest and the Levite as He shows them slinking past the wounded man. Orthodoxy without love.

The Last Tie.—Have you seen a forest quite bare of leaves at the end of autumn? But there in yonder tree, on one of the topmost branches, there is one leaf left, hanging from the spray by a tiny tendril. But presently a gust of wind sweeps by, and snaps the tendril, and carries the leaf away—up—just where it will.

So will the hour come when the last thread of selfish love will be snapped by the love of God, and this love will bear you away from yourself, and up into the highest heavens.

The Family Bible.—We like to see the family Bible placed conspicuous in humble homes. Not, as we sometimes see it, serving for an ornament on the side-table—kept scrupulously clean — passed as an heirloom from parent to child, but with all the marks of daily use upon it. But we have read our family Bible to little purpose if it has not taught us that the family is itself a Bible—I had almost ventured to say, a revelation even more direct from God. There is nothing can declare God to us like a living fatherhood and motherhood. God had written of Himself for ever in vain. But when He tells us He is a parent among children, we cannot miss the truth. And as to his method in governing the world, there is nothing can enlighten us like the family. How little the children can judge of the wisdom shown in their management—how little they dream of what is being done with them. When the infant comes forth into the family, what with washings and dressings and other arrangements which time out of mind have been sore trials to the infant taste, it might conceive itself to have fallen into very cruel hands. All these things would seem to be against it. And wherein would the opinion of the infant differ from the opinion of a John Stuart Mill, when he decided that the world is under the control of some malevolent power, because of the suffering

he saw around. Therefore let these little John Stuart Mills in the family instruct us concerning the John Stuart Mills in the world. And when we see that Love ordains the trials in the family, we shall not find it hard to believe that Love ordains the trials in the world.

Put these two Bibles side by side. Study them daily. Let the one interpret the other.

Sanctification is the Will of God.—You walk through the fields in early summer with your friend the farmer. And he says, while you stand together gazing at the crops, "It is my intention that these crops grow ripe in the autumn." You think, "Why, of course it is—what else would he have planted them for?"

It *ought* to be a truism to us that God wills our ripeness —our sanctification. For what else has He planted us? for what else is He nourishing us? God *must* mean his creatures to come to perfection. This thought is the only solution of all the difficulties in this world.

Yet who of us trusts Him for it!

God Rules.—God rules in nature. God rules in the councils of nations. God rules in each individual's life.

He rules when nature is destructive and terrible as well as in the calm days of summer, when winds are gentle and skies are blue. He was ruling when Alexander and Napoleon were slaying their thousands and breaking down the world. And in your life He is ruling. You look up the past, and see how many blunders you have made, and you think that God was not in your blunders. If God has not been in my blunders, the greatest part of my life has been without Him. *How* God is in our blunders we may not see, but He is there. Only the atheist says no. And He is bringing good from it all. Many a rung in the long ladder by which you climb to heaven He has cut out from your castaway blunders. He rules.

And if He rules it follows that the world is not a failure, but a success. Many persons sigh over it as a failure, but not any man who rightly reads his New Testament that God is working all things after the counsel of his own will.

I believe that it is only through sin that we could be

brought to purity and holiness. It required that sin should enter before goodness could be chosen. God at least has made no blunder. This is not the first world He has carried up through darkness to light.

"*Able to Save.*"—Christ comes to each of us.

See that moonlight reflected on the sea! Thousands are gazing from the shore on that broad trail of silvery splendour which appears to flow directly to each, although they stand a hundred miles apart. That others see it reach them does not prevent you from seeing it reach you.

Christ is for each of us. None the less He knocks at the door of your heart with all his perfect personality, that He is also knocking at the hearts of all the race.

And this is our hope for mankind. Yonder spreads China with its hundreds of millions. But there is a whole Christ for each beating human heart. He is enough.

Disinterestedness.—Strive every day to rise out of your own little interest into disinterestedness. Strive every day to see the universe as God is seeing it. You are looking at your own narrow concerns with the microscope of selfishness, while God is looking at the wide universe with the telescope of love.

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